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A Key to
The Revelation of St. John
the Divine

by

G. W. Trevelyan
Vicar of S. Stephen's, Bournemouth.



"He which testifieth these things saith,
'Hear: I come quickly.'
'Amen: Come, Lord Jesus.'"

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SUMMARY.

Subject of the Book :

" JESUS, SON OF GOD AND SON OF MAN IN HIS PRESENT RELATION
TO HIS CHURCH AND THE WORLD."

- (1) After a Preface—i. 9 to ii.—the Incarnate Son of God is introduced to us in the vision of a Figure standing on earth and reaching into the fulness of heaven. Chapter i.
- (2) Jesus as the Lord of His Church, dealing with her to purify her, so that through her He may take His place as Lord of the whole Creation of God. Chapters ii. and iii.
- (3) Jesus would fill us with confident hope, before we are called to see the terror of His judgments on a world which rejects His rule. Chapter iv. gives a vision of the whole Creation " bound by gold chains about the feet of God " : in Chapter v. we see a sinful world, redeemed through the Lamb of God, who reveals the purpose of God for His Creation.
- (4) Chapters vi. to xviii. introduce us to the great conflict of Jesus against His enemies, the promoters of sin on earth.
 1. In the judgment of the Seals we hear the Creation calling out to Jesus to manifest Himself in judgment, and giving itself to be the instrument of His purpose. Chapter vi. and viii. 3 to 5.
 2. Chapter vii. gives a vision of Jesus setting apart His faithful servants, so that they should be safe amidst the judgments on the world : we see the triumph of faithful service of God.
 3. In Chapter viii. 6 to end of ix. and in Chapter xi. 14 to end, we see the Prayers of Jesus and His Church calling down a more terrible judgment, that of the Trumpets. In it we are introduced to the power of evil spirits as lying behind the sin of the world.
 4. In Chapter x. and xi. to 13 we are comforted by the thought of the witness to Jesus borne by His faithful servants : they will be bitterly persecuted by the world, but shall rise, as their Lord did, to new life and be called by Him to their great reward.
 5. In Chapters xii. and xiii, see that the conflict is against the powers of evil and began before the world existed. Chapter xii. shows the great Dragon, Satan opposing God's purpose of the Incarnation ; as the enemy of the Christ in His earthly ministry ; and as the persistent enemy of the Church of Christ. Chapter xiii. shows the other two persons of the anti-Trinity of evil, the

first beast, who is the spirit of worldliness, and the second beast, who is the spirit of false religion, parodies of Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

6. Before the vision of the final judgments we are called to what is going on behind them all—the preparation for the marriage of the Lamb with His Church. It is God, Almighty, righteous and true, who acts in all the judgments of spirits and men. It is a vision of consolation.
 7. So we led up to the judgment of the Bowls, more terrible than those which we read of before, a judgment which reaches the spirits of evil. Chapter xvi. There follows in Chapters xvii. and xviii. the judgment against false religion, Babylon the degenerate Church, the Harlot which has deceived the world.
- (5) In xix. to xx. 6, we see the faithful called to enter into rest and triumph with their Lord.
 - (6) xx. 7 to xxii. 5. The completed victory over sin and the manifestation of the perfected City of God, the New Jerusalem.
 - (7) xxii. 6 to the end. The Church waiting and looking forward from this world to the coming of the Christ; with the prayer that He may always be manifesting Himself, "Come Lord Jesus."



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AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

The writer of this volume makes no claim to be anything more than an interpreter of an interpretation.

Many years ago he got to know Dr. Milligan's works upon the Revelation of St. John, (1) the Baird lecture of 1885 (2) the exposition of the book in the last volume of the "Popular Commentary" (3) "The book of Revelation", a volume of the "Expositor's Bible."

The interpretation given in these works seems to be one which really does give a key to the understanding of the book by many who find other systems of exposition more than difficult to grasp and requiring so much knowledge, that they cannot follow them.

The Saviour Himself declares, "I, Jesus, have sent my Angel to testify unto you these things for the Churches:" St. John declares that the book is "the Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto Him to show unto His servants:" and it seems impossible to think that it is meant to be a sealed book to all except the learned.

Dr. Milligan holds the Revelation of St. John to be the keystone of the arch of the whole Scriptures, and finds the origin of its unusual language in the Bible itself: this seems at any rate likely to be the case; and it is the supposition upon which this little volume is founded. We find, for instance, that the scheme which underlies the Revelation of St. John is parallel with that which marks his Gospel. In the Gospel we see gradually worked out the idea of the Incarnate Son of God, the Word made

flesh, going out into the world with His disciples for the foundation of the new kingdom of God on earth, through contest to victory : so in the Revelation we see Him going out in and with His Church during the ages of the Christian faith through contest to victory : and the plan of both books seems to be the same. Again, we see that neither of the books could have been written if there had been no prophetical books of the Old Testament. The language of the prophetical books which was taken up by our Lord in His discourse on the last things in St. Matthew xxiv, also to a great extent moulds the ideas of the Revelation.

The thoughts of the book are given to us under the form of visions and symbols ; and visions and symbols can tell us of things which could be expressed in no other form. When once we find that the symbols are not used arbitrarily, but have a definite, fixed meaning throughout, we begin to see that after all the unlearned who are in Christ by the Holy Ghost may be able to understand them. Nothing can show this better than the numbers used throughout. 3 is the number of God ; 4 the number of man ; $3 + 4$ the number of God working in covenant with man : 3×4 (*i.e.* 12) the number of God dwelling in man, and so the number of the Church ; 12×12 , that is 144, is the number of the faith in Christ as it goes out into the world and has grown strong ; 100 the number of an earthly perfection : 1000 the number of God's perfection ; 144,000 the number of the Church of God in her final perfection. It seems that all through the book each symbol keeps the same general meaning.

When we read of "earth," "sea," "sun," "moon," etc., we do not think of the thing itself, but of the spiritual meaning of it. "The earth" means to us the world

of men so far as it fails to live in due dependence on God : " The sea " speaks to us of the same world as a tossing, restless sea of sin : we are told in Chapter i. that the " seven golden Candlesticks " represent the Church of God, and, since the figure must be taken from the seven-branched golden Candlestick in the Holy Place of the Tabernacle, we find that they represent the Church in her devotional life before God. All through the book we read of the appearance of Angels. We find that each of them seems to represent some aspect of our Lord's character and to speak for Him.

The book deals with the present age of the Church from its beginning up to the end of the world. It is not a prophecy of special events which were to happen, but rather shows the principle of our Lord's dealings with the Church and the world : it depicts the true nature of the conflict between good and evil which is always going on, and in which Jesus is the Leader of all the forces of good on earth and in the unseen. Many of the great events of human history may be taken as illustrations of the general conditions of which we read in the book, but no one of them is so important as to be the meaning of the whole of any of the scenes which are brought before our eyes.

The writer of this volume has never found any interpretation of the Revelation which enables him to see the meaning of it as a whole, or consistently to interpret its parts, except this of Dr. Milligan, which in all humility he wants to pass on to others. He believes that it will enable many to take into their hearts a book of Scripture which seems to bring us truth necessary for the Church to know, but to the understanding of which we have to find the key.

THE REVELATION OF ST. JOHN.

CHAPTER I.

Expect to find in this book picture words and picture visions, the purpose of which is to show us our Lord Jesus Christ as He is now in His relation to the true children of His Kingdom, and to the world. He claims that we should acknowledge Him as Lord of the whole Creation.

It is very important to read it in the Revised Version of the New Testament.

Verses 1 to 3. Introduction. The book is a revelation, that is a drawing back of the veil which seems now to hide Our Living Lord from us. The things of which it tells began in the first age of the Church and go on to the end of time. The message comes from the heart of God through Jesus, for whom an Angel representative speaks, and shows visions to the Apostle.

Verses 4 to 8. St. John the Apostle salutes the Church. He gives the blessing of the most Holy Trinity, the Father in His eternal being, the Holy Ghost in His sevenfold gift, Jesus, the Son of God, God's messenger to man, and man's Saviour and King. He feels impelled then ("*Unto Him . . .*") to make an act of praise to Jesus our Lord, who made us members of the kingdom of God and Priests before God for the world. Then He breaks out into the thought that in every age up to the end our Lord is ever appearing as the judge of men, and that men are responsible for what they think and say and do (verse 7). Note that "the tribes of the

earth " means people and nations which do not acknowledge God as their King.

Then our Lord Himself speaks (8). Alpha and Omega are the first and the last letters of the Greek Alphabet. The alphabet supplies words : Our Lord is the complete Word of God for this world.

In 9 to 19 we find the chief point of this chapter. St. John, the exile banished by the government to Patmos, is " in the Spirit " of God and sees the vision of Jesus Christ as a sort of colossal figure standing in the world and reaching up into heaven. This is the first of the wonderful visions of the book. The vision shows our Lord walking in the midst of golden-lamp stands, like the golden Lampstand in the Holy Place of the Israelite Tabernacle. His clothing is that of Priest and King. His head flashes with the diamond light of glorious holiness, the holiness of God shining through His Manhood. His eyes glow with the light of the Holy Spirit, a light which scorches the evil in the hearts of men and cleanses those who love God. His feet by which he walks amongst us belong to this world, as does the brass ; but they are full of divine life, light and warmth, as brass glowing in the furnace. The varied expression of His voice in love, mercy and judgment may be compared to the sound of the waves in their gentle whispering and in their terrible force. The words which He utters are thoughts which pierce by their witness into the depths of the heart, " discerning the thoughts and intents of the heart." When He turns His face towards us, it is like the sun in its life-giving warmth and in its power of destroying that which is not rooted in the love of God.

Then we see the Apostle (verse 17) overwhelmed with the greatness of the vision : but our Lord proclaims Him-

self as the same Jesus, eternal Son of God and Son of Man who died upon the Cross for our salvation, and who is now given the authority by which He releases men from the power of the death, which, apart from His redeeming work, would hold mankind in its prison: He brings them out of the obscure world of darkness, Hades, into the light and life of the kingdom of God.

Then (verse 20) our Lord explains the revelation of the seven stars which have been seen supported by His right hand: they are the Church in her aspect of giving light to and guiding the world, as the stars give light to us and serve to guide us in the direction we have to go. Like the stars, the light of the Church needs studying. This interpretation is based on the idea that the Angels of the Churches represent the living personality of each Church within the whole Church.

The seven golden lampstands take their idea from the steady light of the seven-branched golden lampstand ever shining with its steady light in the Holy Place of the Tabernacle. They speak of the Church in her devotional life, as she maintains the quiet life of prayer and meditation in the presence of the Christ in whom she dwells. As the Church witnesses before men (the seven stars), so she ever witnesses before God to the love of man for Him, and brings all her life before Him.

Note that the message was given, not merely to the seven Churches of Asia, to whom it was first sent, but to the whole Church (11). Indeed this is contained in the number seven. All the numbers in the book are "mystical" —*i.e.*, they have a spiritual meaning. The number seven has a double meaning: it contains the number of God added to the number of man ($3 + 4$), and thus represents God working in covenant with man:

it also has the idea of unity in diversity, and represents the essential unity of the Church as the Body of Christ in the midst of its diversity, for many different characters of men and of human society are taken up into the unity of the Christ.

CHAPTER II.

The message of our Lord in this book is to the whole Christian Church from its beginning in the age of the Apostles to the end of time. As the Seven Churches of Asia together represent the whole Church, so the messages of Chapters ii. and iii. to individual Churches of the Seven speak of conditions in them which will be found in other Churches to the end of time.

In these "Epistles to the Seven Churches" we find our Lord commending that which he finds to be good in them; severely rebuking their sins, the necessary result of which he points out: urging them to repentance and fresh effort: attracting them with glorious promises, if they will set themselves to overcome with Him in the contest against sin and in the patient pursuit of godliness.

It is most interesting to notice that the plan of the Revelation is parallel with that of St. John's Gospel. In the Gospel the Incarnate Son of God, the Word of God, is introduced to us (St. John i. 1 to 18). In the Revelation He is again introduced as the Lord, in the vision of chapter i., showing Him as still with us on earth, yet in heaven.

Again in the Gospel we find Jesus first appearing amongst His disciples on the field of human history in

St. John i. 19 to ii. 11. That which corresponds with this is Rev. ii. and iii., in which our Lord is seen in His first dealings with His Church after His Ascension. It is in His Church that He first takes His place as Lord of the world.

The first message is to the Church in Ephesus, ii. 1 to 7. The vision of Chapter i. has shown our Lord as ruling and guiding His Church, under the figure of walking amongst the seven golden Lampstands and holding the seven stars in His hand. That thought is reproduced here, 1. He is able to commend the Church for its patient endurance against false teachers, and for holding steadfastly to the truth which He has revealed, 2, 3. But the Church has lost the keenness of its first love for Him, 4. They must repent and go back to the beautiful simplicity of their faith: otherwise they will lose their place as a living Church, 5. Still he has a special word of praise. They have resisted the immorality of the world around them, 6. In this, as in all the messages, we have our Lord repeating words He often used on earth, warning people that He has a message from God, and that it must not be neglected. Also He promises that they who resist the temptation of sinful pleasure shall find their full satisfaction in the Life which He gives, and which was prophesied of in the Tree of Life in the Garden of Eden, 7.

The "Nicolaitans." Apparently this word in the Greek is a rough translation of the word "Balaamites." Balaam, the false Prophet, who was not allowed to curse the Israelite people of God, tried afterwards to revenge himself by leading the people into fornication. Remember the fierce temptation which would come to the Christians from the licentiousness of the world around them,

and that weak, members of the Church might be easily led away by it. We know only too well how it is so at the present time. So we take the "Nicolaitans" to mean those who would lead the members of the Church to tolerate and take part in the prevalent sins of impurity.

In the Epistle to Smyrna, ii. 8 to 11, our Lord is again spoken of under terms of the vision in chapter i. as the Lord, who is eternal God, and yet is the Man Jesus who died for us, 8. The Christians in Smyrna were a poor community in the midst of a wealthy and prosperous province. Our Lord proclaims that they are wealthy in the true riches and praises their brave endurance of affliction. As it was Jews who persecuted our Lord Himself, so now Jews were the bitterest opponents of the Church in Smyrna, 9. They are not to be afraid, though they have much to suffer. It is Satan who is working behind their enemies. Truly the trial will be severe; the use of the number 10 denotes a kind of earthly perfection of suffering; but also seems to mean that the suffering is limited and over-ruled by God. Those who are faithful unto death, who are willing to endure all for Christ and His Church, will receive the Crown which consists of Life, the life eternal and perfect which God gives to His faithful children. It is the crown which our Lord won through severe contests and glorious victories, 10. Over these the "second death" the awful possibility of having no share in the Life Eternal in God—shall have no power, 11.

The third message is to the Church in Pergamum, ii. 12 to 17. Again according to the vision of Chapter i., our Lord is seen with the sword of His message to man, which bears witness to man of the truth about God and man, and which penetrates the hearts of men, 12. Again

He is able to praise the Church. It was in the midst of a city worthy to be called "Satan's throne," distinguished for licentiousness and for the kind of witchcraft and search after the "Occult," which has marked our own generation. Faith in Jesus has held them firm even to martyrdom, 13. But they had given way to the temptation to licentiousness, which our Lord hates, 14, 15. They must repent and fight sternly against the enemies of Christ, or they will lose their greatest chance, and our Lord will have to refuse them as His army and to come Himself to fight against His foes, 16. The reward of those who overcome in this fight is the Living Bread, our Lord Himself to dwell in them, the unutterable joy of which is as yet hidden from men: and in their mind a knowledge which is God's gift to them, typified by the flashing diamond stone in the High Priest's breast-plate, by which God spoke His word to men: and on the stone is the New Name of the man—what he has become and may become in the perfect development of his life in Christ, 17.

In these first three Epistles we have seen the Church as she is in herself, more distinct from the world in her early life than she afterwards became. In the next four we find evil getting much more into the Church and the contest is much fiercer.

The Epistle to Thyatira, ii. 18 to 29. Our Lord is seen with eyes, as in Chapter i., that are glowing love to them that love Him, and a burning fire of judgment to those who reject His love. He is seen in His perfect humanity, dwelling amongst us on earth, for His feet are burnished brass: but it is essentially as "the Son of God" that He now shows Himself, for in these last four Epistles it is His character as Judge of His Church and the world

that is most prominently brought forward, 18. Our Lord is able to praise the Church for its loving ministry to God and man, and for its faith shown in patient endurance and that there is progress in these virtues, 19. But, alas! the immorality of the world has eaten its way right into the heart of the Church. As Jezebel, the wife of Ahab, stirred up her husband "to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord," so professing members of the Christian community have deliberately brought in an immoral philosophy to lead the Church into fornication and idolatry. At Pergamum, the evil came from an outward source, Balaam; here at Thyatira, it comes from an inward source, Jezebel ("thy wife, Jezebel") 20. But now the opportunity of public repentance is past; our Lord will cast these false teachers of sin and their followers into the bed of sickness and sorrow, unless they repent and "come out of her works." The Churches of the world shall recognize God's judgments in the world, and that His judgment on each sinner is just, 21—23. But they who have rejected this false teaching, who have seen that the depths of knowledge to which the false teachers have laid claim are but "the depths of Satan," have already to face a great burden, and the Lord will lay no more on them, 24. They must however hold fast to the great tradition they have received of life in Christ and holiness, 25. The promised reward for perseverance in faithfulness against the world is that the people of Christ shall subdue and rule over the world which has persecuted them, and utterly break its power; for it is the authority of Christ which they have, 26, 27. They shall, moreover, possess as their own the Christ, the morning star of a new day, in which sin is done away and holiness triumphs, 28.

(Note what we said before that " the Angel " of a Church represents the Church as a living personality, which can be considered as a whole, apart from the thought of its separate members).

CHAPTER III.

The Epistle to the Church in Sardis iii. 1 to 6. Our Lord here introduces Himself as having in His possession the sevenfold gift of the Holy Spirit of which we have heard in i. 4; He is also the Master and Owner of the Church, which in the Vision of Chapter i. we have already seen spoken of under the figure of seven Stars giving light to the world. In Chapter i. 16, He was holding the Church as protecting it; but here the thought shewn in the Greek words is that He is the absolute Lord of His Church; it is in this character that He claims from the Church in Sardis, not that it should be prosperous and hold a high position in the world, but that it should maintain its true character as the disciple and servant of Christ crucified, to whom the world has nothing to offer, but whose whole hope is in Christ. Sardis was a commercial city, great in the eye of the world: its religion, the worship of Cybele, was surrounded with great outward splendour, but was terribly impure. Our Lord proclaims that, though the Church might claim to have as much splendour in her worship as the world in that of Cybele, though men spoke freely of it as living, yet it was in truth dead in the sight of God the Judge of all. Always the times when a Church is popular and at ease in the enjoyment of many outward privileges, are times

of great moral danger, for it is liable to be honeycombed with worldliness, forgetting that it can only live in the spirit of the holy Cross, 1. Our Lord warns the Church to take up again its true offensive against the world, the flesh and the devil, and to build up in itself the Christian character which it has almost lost : for He judges that there are no works of this Church that He can count as really good, 2. They must return in spirit to the childhood of their Church, when they gladly received the tradition of the Faith in Christ and give themselves to live as Christians should ; and that with deep repentance for their sins. If not, Jesus Himself will come in judgment on them here and now, silently and unexpectedly, as a robber comes to sack a house ; there will be a special manifestation of judgment, 3. Even in this Church, which was most living in the eyes of men but was really dead, there were still some individual Christians, whose character was a manifestation of the Name of Jesus in them : even now He judges that they have kept their character (" garments ") free from defilement ; He promises the fulfilment of that character till it becomes the bright glory of the future life, in which they shall be with the Lord Himself in the radiant happiness of the life in their true home, the heart of God, 4. The promise is again to those who overcome in the struggle against sin and for holiness ; we see them at home in the glory of God ; we see them as men whose names are for ever on the register of the citizens of the kingdom of God ; Jesus Himself will stand sponsor for them, and rejoice to acknowledge them before God and the Holy Angels as having a right to the freedom of the Holy City, 5.

Note that in these last four Epistles, in which we find the Church in the heat of her conflict with the world,

the warning of our Lord to listen attentively to His message comes most emphatically at the end.

We turn with relief to the Epistle to the Church in Philadelphia (iii. 7-13), for our Lord is able to give refreshing words of commendation to it in contrast to the severity of His judgment in the Epistle to Sardis, and that to Laodicea, which follows. In our Lord's introduction of Himself to this Church we see Him again as the Son of Man, the King who is one with ourselves, who dwells with us in His Church here and now: He is, as He would make us to be, consecrated to the service of God and man (the word "holy" in Greek implies this); in Him is found the real truth of what human life means, that which endures for ever when all the seen things of this life pass away; He is the Prince of Life who opens and closes the kingdom of heaven, opens it to the man of faith, who by his faith enters into the kingdom of the unseen spiritual things, closes it to the man whose vision is bounded by the things of this earthly life, 7. Our Lord has given to this Church, as to all the Church of all the ages, the open door into the kingdom; for He Himself is the Door; and this Church has kept the Word of the Lord as her most precious heritage; and has stood firmly when tempted to deny her Lord; so the power which our Lord gave is still with her and in her, though not all that it might be, 8. The Jews in this city carried on the terrible tradition of hatred and persecution against our Lord and His Church which led them to crucify the Son of God: our Lord speaks of them as no true Jews, but an assembly of followers of Satan. He prophesies that some time they shall bow in submission before the Body of Christ, which they have persecuted; they shall at last recognise that

the Church is a supreme manifestation of the Love of God, 9. True that the word of Christ cannot be kept without much patience; the Church in Philadelphia has maintained this spirit of patience; so our Lord will keep them safe—remember that the message, though spoken to a particular Church, is for the Church now and for all time—in the great trial which will come on the whole world to test the ungodly, whether they will not at last turn towards God (note that “they that dwell on the earth” refers to the ungodly, who have no spiritual vision), 10. “I come quickly” is to such a Church a message full of hope and encouragement: it will fill them with the determination to hold fast to the faith and the life in Christ and to look for the Crown which is the imparting of God’s own Life to us in far fuller measure than we can dream of, 11. He that overcometh shall be, not merely a living stone in the Temple of God, but a support and ornament to it, a pillar of the fabric which enshrines the living presence of God; he shall never have again to come out to the earthly life of suffering and temptation; he shall be marked upon his forehead with the Name of God, himself being the transparency through which shines the glory of God’s revelation of His love; and, as we look again, we see shining through him the revelation of the wonders of the City of God, the perfected Body of Christ; and again, the Name or revelation of Jesus Himself in His glory, whose character and work is to be clearly seen through His people, 12.

The Epistle to the Church in Laodicea (iii. 14 to 22), the last of the seven Epistles to the Church, shews us a Church which, in the full light of Christ, has relapsed into apathy and indifference in its religion. Our Lord presents

Himself to them as "The Amen": the congregation at the Eucharist signifies that it accepts the full faith in Christ and all that it means in human life by the "Amen": so our Lord has accepted to the full the will of God for the salvation of the world and all of suffering that it meant to Him, bringing that will of God to its full accomplishment in His own person. Next he is proclaimed as the faithful and true witness to God and His will. He is seen again as the beginning of the Creation of God, set in the midst of it to bring it to its perfect end. These expressions seem to point the contrast between the toil and suffering which the Son of Man bore and the lazy slothfulness of a Church which has fallen into the apathy of neglect of the will of God, 14. The Church of Laodicea is neither cold nor hot. Our Lord speaks of three states of heart and mind in which people may be—active and violent opposition to God (cold)—active love of God with energetic service (hot)—lukewarmness, with no enthusiasm for good or evil: He says that the first of the three is better than the last, for it is more likely to end in conversion to the love of God than to hold the faith and not to be ready to toil and suffer for it, 15. Our Lord can make nothing of such a character. He must eject it from His Body the Church, 16. It was worldly prosperity which had made this Church indifferent to the claim of the Christ for loving and continuous service to God and man: in truth, in spite of its prosperous appearance this Church was spiritually poor and blind and naked, 17. Our Lord counsels the Church to come to Him for the true gold of His kingdom, purified in the fire of self-sacrifice; for the character of holiness (white garments); for the grace of the Holy Ghost (eyesalve) to give her true insight into the real value

of things, 18. He is knocking at the door of each heart : if we repent and invite Him in, He will enter and sup with us at the banquet which God has prepared, as He supped with His disciples in the familiar intercourse of the Upper Room on Maundy Thursday ; and afterwards take us to feast with Him in the Heavenly life, 19, 20. It is to a Church which He has threatened to eject from the kingdom of God, as well as to the whole Church, that He speaks and promises that all that overcome in the fight against the evil, which holds men down from their true life in Him, shall share His joy and power in heaven, who is Himself one with the Father of all in His Throne. We can make no attempt to measure the immeasurable glory of which He speaks, 21.

CHAPTER IV.

We have found already that the Gospel of St. John and the Revelation of St. John are constructed on similar lines of thought. In the Gospel we find the story of Jesus during his earthly life ; in the Revelation we see Him in His present life as our Heavenly King, ever with us still and dealing with His Church and the world. In the mind of St. John the earthly life of our Lord is the model and type of His present life. Dwelling now in His Church He goes through an experience similar to that through which He went when He dwelt amongst men in His earthly body. So, in St. John's Gospel we look now at chapters ii. 12 to iv. 54, and find Jesus manifesting Himself as the Son of God and the Messiah whom the Jews

had learnt to expect; men are attracted to Him; faith grows; and we see the promise of the great future when men shall indeed know him as the centre of human life. The corresponding section in the Revelation is Chapters iv. and v. : here we see pictures of what the Church in which he now dwells may be, visions of the Church in her full beauty. In both the Gospel and the Revelation these sections fill us with joyful and confident hope before we are plunged into the narrative of the terrible conflict with the world, which He faced in His earthly life, and which He now faces in His present dealings with men. In the Gospel we find the ideal of the Christ going out to claim the world for Himself, that He may bind it in chains of love to the throne of the Father. In the first part of the Revelation picture (Chapter iv.) we find the ideal picture of the gathering up of the whole creation before God in a vision which shews heaven and earth in one : in this picture the thought of sin has been kept out ; it is as if we see the ideal of creation in the mind of God apart from the entry of sin. Pass to Chapter v. and you see a vision very like the first, but in which the thought of sin is fully faced, and is seen as conquered by the Christ : there in a redeemed and restored creation we find the Christ who has passed through death to life for all creation; and has become the means through which the whole creation is to be restored to take the place planned for it in the eternal purpose of the Creator.

Chapter iv. There opens before the eyes of the Seer a vision of heaven and earth in one : and a voice bids him ascend that he may look upon the things on earth from the heavenly point of view : he is called to see the fulfilment of God's purpose for His Creation, 1. He passes under the full power of the Holy Spirit and sees

first a throne of light, and the Lord of all Creation, God the Holy Trinity, God in His perfect unity, 2. There is light like "Jasper", of the flashing purity of the Diamond, the appearance of the Holiness of God: there is also a light like that of "Sardius", a blood-red sign of His Majesty and Judgments. There is the Rainbow, the sign of His mercy and love to those who enter into covenant with Him: the colours in the rainbow are the refraction of the pure light of the sun; so this rainbow shews the character of the Christ in the varied characters of His servants: and the whole of it shines with a soft Emerald light, the green colour of life, for it is living souls that are seen round the throne, 3. Within the very circle of the Rainbow are seen forms representing the Universal Church of God, whose task it is to interpret God to the world by bearing witness to Him—(12 is the number of the Church—3, the number of God, multiplied into 4, the number of Man:—and this again multiplied by 2, denoting witness given to God by man): and the "thrones" signify God's purpose that His people should share in the glory of His Throne: their white priestly robes are of perfect purity: they are crowned with the glory which is the fruit of a life given to the Christ, and their Crown is like His; indeed their Crown is His, for He wins His complete Crown in and through them, 4. From the Throne itself proceed lightnings and thunders and voices, like those which came from Mount Sinai, when God gave His law to His people of Israel: for it is the judgments of God for righteousness and against sin which cleanse the heart of man and bring him into the perfect purity for which he is created: and with the signs of judgment is seen the sign of the Holy Ghost proceeding ever from God to build up the character of God's creation, bringing

true light to it through man ; the light of the Holy Spirit is sevenfold, for God makes covenant with man (7 is the covenant number, 3 added to 4—God working with man ; also 7 is a perfect number in its way, for it tells of many ways of working, which yet are all the influence of the one Spirit), 5. Before the Throne is seen the world of history ; it will be seen in other places as a tossing, restless sea, the world as hurt by sin ; but here it is a bright, clear, pure vision of the world as God wills it to be by the working of His loving providence in the story of His Creation. As from this we raise our eyes to the Throne to adore the glory of God in His Creation, we see a further vision of the greatness of Nature, for we see it appearing, not only around the Throne, but even in it—in God himself, who thus is also seen in His indwelling in it ; Nature (it includes man) is seen as four (4 is the number of man and of Nature) Living Creatures, holding its true place in the heart of God and in His Universe: the scene reminds us of the Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle, in which the two winged figures of Cherubim overshadowed and guarded the Mercy Seat of God, at each end of the Ark : and Nature is seen as full of the Holy Spirit, who in and with it is ever looking out to see and follow the purpose of God's providence in the past and in the future, 6. All the living creatures have the suggestion of the human appearance, for together they represent all Nature as finding its highest expression in Man, brought through Man to its true place in God : there is in it the might and sovereignty of the Lion ; the character of worship as suggested by the Bull-calf of Sacrifice ; the character of the human mind and heart united with God (in the Third figure—for 3 is the number of God) ; there is also the soaring majesty

of the Eagle, 7. As in Isaiah's vision (Is. vi.) of the Seraphim before the Throne, the Living Creatures have six wings, for they bear witness to God (6 is 3×2 , the number of God multiplied into the number of witness), by their swift obedience and service: and the height of their service and joy is found in answering the loving purpose of God by unceasing praise of Him, who has ever manifested Himself in the past; who is the eternal "I AM"; and whom we ever expect to manifest Himself in fresh ways, 8. St. John hears their song of praise, and he knows that, when the song of Nature thus reaches its perfection, it will be swelled and brought to its full meaning by the assenting voice of the perfected Church of God, the Priest of God for all Nature, which bows down in utter adoration of the eternal God, and offers to Him all that it is and can be, the crown of its life, keeping nothing for itself, 9, 10. The Seer hears then the complete and glorious ascription of praise by the whole creation to its Creator: all things belong to God; the glory, the honour, the power manifested by Creation is all God's; He is the Creator of all; all things sprang from the purpose of His most loving heart and will before they came into being; and His is the Divine, Omnipotent wisdom which is seen in every aspect of the Universe; they return it all to Him, and in so doing they find their true life in Him, 11.

CHAPTER V.

Passing from Chapter iv. to v. is something like the transition when, while one Magic Lantern picture remains on the sheet, a second picture, different, but yet like the

first in its general idea, is thrown on, and the first gradually dissolves into the second. So in Chapter v. we retain the impression of the vision of the whole creation as designed by God to find its perfect life in the all-embracing radiance of the love and wisdom and will of God which Chapter iv. has given us ; but there comes to us a fresh vision, in which we find added to the first the recognition that the world is passing through the terrible ordeal of temptation, and has been horribly hurt by sin. We naturally ask, can the glorious ideal of creation as seen in Chapter iv. have any meaning now for a world so spoilt ? Chapter v. gives the answer. In it we see the world restored to its glory through Jesus, the Incarnate Son of God, through whom a sinful world can again attain to its perfect life before God.

St. John still sees the Throne of Light and that which he knows to be the manifestation to him of God the Blessed Three in One ; but he sees something further which draws his attention, which looks to him like a parchment " roll," the " book " of his time, filled with writing on both sides, closed and sealed with a seven-fold seal. The Book contains the plan and purpose of God's loving wisdom for this world of ours, a purpose fully complete, a mind fully made up, sealed in the heart of God till such time as there comes on earth the Man who can understand it and reveal it to men, Jesus the Son of God : the seven seals mark it as also the revelation of God's Covenant with man, for seven is the number of the Covenant : the roll is on the hand of God, not clasped in it, for it is God's purpose to make the contents of it known, 1. Then St. John sees an Angel form, one of God's heavenly servants, strong in mind and spirit to represent our Lord, coming to reveal God to man, with great desire

to shew what God purposes in His infinite love : He calls to the expectant Creation with a strong voice to make it see that there is only One who can do this, 2. There is no answer from any part of the whole of God's Creation, 3. The Seer is completely feeling the scene before his mind : he, in his vision, weeps that man cannot see, what he so desires to see—what is the meaning of the wonderful world in which he finds himself, 4. But the Church of God has been taught in the past ages to look for the Christ, and has seen the Sacrificial death and the Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus the Son of God : it is able to affirm that He, the strong one of the Tribe of Judah—of those who know that life is centred in the worship of God ("Judah" means "Praise")—the Conqueror of sin, the root from which sprang David (the type of Lordship over the earth), overcame all the opposing powers of sin, and is worthy to reveal at last the full purpose of God, as a whole and in divers parts, as men are able to understand it, 5. All is prepared, and the Seer has before his eyes Jesus, the Son of God and the Son of Man, in the character of the great Sacrifice for the sin of the world : in the midst of the Throne, in the heart of God, and in the midst of the whole Creation and the Church of the Living God (the Priest for Creation) is seen the Lamb of God, the Offering, prophesied of by all the Sacrifices of the Israelite Church : He has passed through sacrificial death to life : He stands, as the Priest of God, ever making intercession for us : He bears the marks of His earthly sacrifice : He has complete strength, manifested in many ways (seven horns) : He has dwelling in Him the full insight of God the Holy Ghost to deal with the whole Creation (seven eyes), 6. He was manifested before God and the world, and has taken, to hold

it for ever, from the most willing hand of God the revelation of the plan of God for Creation, 7. The sight calls forth from Nature and the Church the chorus of utter joy and praise : here is the fulfilment of the hopes raised by the praise of the Tabernacle and Temple Services with its harps and orchestral music (each one has his own harp, the music of his life, to contribute to the great harmony) : they present the incense of the prayers of those who know themselves consecrated to the service of the Good God : Prayer is fulfilled : according to the will of God they prostrate themselves before Him, whom God has appointed to be the Lord and King of all Creation, 8. It is the Church of God, they whom God has redeemed out of the earth, whom he calls as His Royal Priesthood, which makes the song of all Creation articulate, for this is what it is appointed for : they sing without ceasing the new song, new because it celebrates what no imagination of man could before have conceived, the glory of the complete redemption, the release of Creation from the tyranny of sin to find its utter satisfaction and rest in God : the Lamb of God has passed through the life of utter humiliation and self-sacrifice : He has thus made good His love for man, and brought with Him in His triumphal progress to His home in the heart of God all who at any time and from every race of men have accepted life through Him, 9. Not only has He made them to be a Kingdom of God, finding the full satisfaction of their individual and social life, but also has taken them to be partners with Him in His Priestly work, calling them to be for ever workers together with God, the eternal and Almighty : He makes them to share in His own Lordship over Creation, 10. Here an innumerable host of Angels, in full and most joyful acceptance of the

will of God, which yet places man in a sphere to which Angels can never attain, takes up the chorus of praise : they do not themselves share in the redemption, but they are in most whole-hearted sympathy with the purpose of God : they seem to form a permanent medium of the Love of God in heaven and on earth, living expressions of that love : from the point of view of man they are of complete perfection (10, the number of earthly perfection, multiplied into 1,000, the perfect number of God) : from the view of God they have still higher perfection (1,000 multiplied into itself), 11. The thought which first of all and above all moves the Angel Host to its outburst of praise is the power which they can see manifested in man through the Lamb that Has been slain : they have seen and wondered at it often on earth in man : and now they see that it is Jesus in whom this power resides, and through whom it is manifested on earth. The Church of God in her praise has seen this from the point of those who have themselves been redeemed : the Angels, who do not share in redemption, see it as being instruments of the power of God, who have longed that His power should have its free course on earth, and now see the accomplishment of their longings through the Lamb. Therefore they now understand that to the Lamb also belong the honour, the glory and the dominion, as the Man who is the plenipotentiary of God, 12. Then comes the glorious chorus in which all created things without exception send up their shout of triumph and their hymn of praise to God the Three in One and to the Lamb through whom has been accomplished the regeneration of the world. And the chief thought of their song is the blessing which the Almighty is pouring out upon His Creation, 13. The living Creatures representing all

Nature, have no more to say, but to express their deep assent to the ascription of praise : and the Church of God, God's Priesthood for Creation, has no word to add at all : its heart is too full to speak : it can but bow down in silent adoration, 14.

CHAPTER VI.

We pass on here to new ground. Our Lord reveals the fact that His own life and that of the Church in which He dwells will be one of severe conflict against the all-pervading influence of the powers of evil. For behind the earthly manifestation of sin there lies the kingdom of darkness in its organized and unceasing hostility to the Christ.

We have therefore a long section of this book (vi. to xviii. 24) telling us of this conflict ; reminding us of our Lord's conflict in His earthly life ; with similar opposition and similar triumph. But do not forget that in the midst of it we are assured again and again of the security and peace which are the lot of those who boldly throw themselves in with our Lord in the struggle. The special message given to these is that they are to come out of an evil world and have no fellowship with its sins.

We have a similar section in the Gospel of St. John (v. to xii.), in which we read of our Lord's personal conflict with the evil in the world, evil which utterly laid hold even of one of His Apostles. Yet it is in the midst of all this that He reveals the character of His relation to His true disciples as the Bread of Life, and the Good Shepherd, and that He is seen raising Lazarus from the

dead and riding in triumph into Jerusalem as the King of God's appointment.

Chapter vi., then, of the Revelation introduces us to the great principles which mark the Church in her struggle with the world through the whole period from its foundation to the end of time. Here and afterwards we find no prophecy of particular events, however great, even of such a stupendous event as the great war of our own time : though such events are indeed illustrations of the great principles of our Lord's relation to the world, and to His Church, the scene of whose life is in that world.

Jesus, whose character is seen as that of the Lamb of God, who has passed through death to life, has taken the Book of the purpose of God for His Creation and reveals such things as man is able to see of the working of that purpose. He does so first in answer to the call of all Creation, represented by one of the four Living Creatures. This reminds us how St. Paul speaks of the whole Creation groaning and travailing in pain, waiting for the revealing of the Sons of God. It is a cry which is heard through the whole of this Book till in the last chapter it finds its final expression in the prayer of the Church for all time. "Even so come, Lord Jesus." It is judgment upon the evil world that is called for by the voice of thunder, 1. In answer to the call we see first the Son of God, the King of the world, going out through the ages conquering and to conquer on the white horse of victory. Here he is seen in His own person : in the other seals of the Chapter we see His action through the events of history. Under the first Seal we are assured of His final triumph : He has already conquered and wears the crown of victory. The Bow suggests that the Conqueror sees and strikes the enemies of God, though Him-

self unseen, 2. In the next seals we recall the three sore judgments of God often spoken of in the prophecies of the Old Testament, the Sword, Famine and Pestilence. Wars and rumours of wars are spoken of in the Second Seal as part of the judgment of a world which has never attained to the Peace which the Prince of Peace came to bring on earth through the Incarnation. Here as all through the Book "the earth" means the society of the world so far as it withdraws itself from the governance of God. There is a strange irony in the phrase "that they should slay one another," for the word "slay" is the sacrificial word used before of the Lamb of God: His sacrifice is most fruitful: theirs is wasted sacrifice, blood spilt on the earth. Where such judgment does not reach, still there is the sword, for the Rider himself holds it, 3 and 4. Then we see the judgment of famine. The corn is weighed and not measured (an emblem of scarcity). The judgment is seen as God's, for it is a voice from the Throne which is heard in the midst of Creation: we know also that God keeps in His own hand the giving or withholding of our "daily bread." A "measure" would contain the amount needed for a man's daily food for one day: but it costs the whole of the daily wage of those times ("a penny a day"). To depend largely on barley for food also implies great scarcity. The oil and the wine are exempted from the curse, for they are that which is needed for true worship and are symbols of God's grace for His people. The faithful may have to share in the scarcity of daily bread, but their joy in God need never fail, 5 and 6. In the fourth Seal we see a horse of corpse-like colour: the Rider is death, who is followed by Hades, the unseen world, which to those who know not the Christ is a state

of darkness and dread. These have authority over "the earth," *i.e.*, over those who are not alive in God. "Four" is the number of the world: this is the "fourth" Seal: the judgment is over the "fourth" part: and the means by which death and Hades take their full possession of men are by "four" judgments, those of the sword, famine, pestilence, and the beasts of the earth. The insistence on the number four seems to mean that they are judgments which come through the laws of Nature: and indeed they all come at the call of the Living Creature who represents Nature as God's Creation, following out His will. This Seal seems to sum up the judgment of the first Seals, shewing how Nature calls out for God to manifest Himself in purging His Creation from the wrong caused by sin, 7 and 8. In the fifth Seal we pass into the unseen world, and are shewn the vision of an Altar like the great Brazen Altar of Sacrifice in the Court of the Tabernacle. As St. John would always connect this Altar with the blood of sacrificed animals, which was poured out at the foot of the Altar, so it may be that it was the appearance of blood that came to him, and that he was led to interpret it as the living souls of the Saints of the Old Covenant who had given themselves as a true sacrifice to God. They are waiting for the fulfilment of the purpose of God in the redemption of the world, and with an eager great cry they call to the Father of all in deep longing that His judgments should be manifested against those who hurt and spoil the souls of men by sin. 9 and 10. The answer is given in deed and word. The waiting Saints are given the white robe of God's righteousness, that which the Christ won for man through His perfected manhood: but they are told that they must wait for the complete

joy of the Kingdom of God till the time of the Church Catholic is fulfilled ; for " they without us cannot be made perfect." 11. The next Seal brings before the Seer the things which denote the beginnings of the last days of this world. The earthquake speaks of unrest and disturbance in an acute form in the world at a time when the whole fabric of human society seems to be falling to pieces. There is a terrible loss of the light which should guide the lives of men ; for the truth of the Incarnate God, Jesus the " Sun " of righteousness, is fearfully obscured and hidden from the hearts and minds of men ; the Church, which receives light from our Lord as the " moon " does from the sun, is seen not to have living life-blood, not living members of Christ as her members, but dead souls, their life-blood spilt on the earth ; and the example of the Saints, which should be a guide to our life, as " stars " to the Sailor, is no longer of any account in the thought of a godless world : and the very sense of the overruling providence of God our King, which should be as a " heaven " spread over the earth, seems to be rolled away, and nothing left in its place. 12, 13, *and first part of* 14. The Seer's eyes are turned again to earth, and there is a shaking and displacing of things which seem as established a part of human society as " mountains " and " islands " are of the earth and the sea. We may perhaps interpret this of the overthrowing of the natural virtues and morality and the following of conscience, which fall when the revelation of the Christ and His Church is shaken from its place. *Second part of* 14. Lastly we hear of a time of such manifestation of God's judgments upon a world which has renounced God as its King, that the whole company of the godless in its sevenfold diversity (" kings

of the earth," &c.) tries to find refuge or annihilation by means of natural things (for it has not found its refuge in Christ), at the revelation of the Creator, and of Him, whom as the Lamb of God they have refused, but whom they now see in the manifestation of His judgment. 15, 16, 17.

NOTE.—The Seventh Seal is found at the beginning of chapter viii., after the vision of consolation for the faithful servants of the Christ in Chapter vii.

CHAPTER VII.

Again and again in this book, in the midst of the revelation of God's judgment against a world which rejects its own life in refusing His love, we find the continual assurance of the welfare of those who accept it. We have in this Chapter a vision of consolation, to sustain and comfort the faithful servants of God, lest they should be overwhelmed by the knowledge of the wrath of God and of the Lamb against sin. In many ways the faithful have to share the effect of the judgment on an ungodly world: they have to pass, as our Lord did, through the discipline of suffering and temptation, but it is in order that, with Him, they may "come out of the great tribulation" cleansed and purified and sanctified. "Every branch in me that beareth fruit, He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit."

God designs winds to purify and revive the earth: but they may be devastating force, as they are in this vision. They are a picture of the work of the Holy Spirit, which may be the inspiration of love in man, but which

may become a force of judgment to those who will not know God. The four Angels are now seen to be holding the fierce winds in check. So for the sake of the faithful the judgment is withheld even from "the earth" of the ungodly till God's servants are made secure. It does not touch even "the sea"—the world tossed about and hurt by sin; or "the trees"—the social life of man which grows out of our human existence, 1. Then we see another Angel, who represents our Lord as the "sun of righteousness." He holds the Seal of God, with which to mark His true children. We have the same thought in Ezekiel, who saw in vision "a man clothed with linen, and having a writer's inkhorn by his side," who is instructed to go through the streets of Jerusalem and to "set a mark on the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that are done in the midst thereof." We have it again in the ceremonial of the Catholic Church when the newly baptized child is marked with the sign of the holy Cross. With a clear strong voice He calls to the Angels of judgment to restrain the fierce winds for a time, till the sealing is accomplished. What is the meaning of the "sealing?" The Lamb of the Passover was brought to the Priest: if he found it fit for sacrifice, he sealed it upon the forehead, and so set it apart as consecrated to God, and as destined for the holy use of sacrifice. So was our Lord sealed by God, as He himself tells us in St. John vi., "for Him hath God the Father sealed." He was set apart for God, to be our sacrifice for sin. So the sealing of the faithful does not speak only of security, but of lives set apart as an offering to God, 2, 3. The number 144,000 loses its meaning as an ordinary number and expresses certain things about the faithful who are sealed. We have seen

12 as the number of the Catholic Church, marked by the thought of God dwelling in man (3×4): multiply 12 by itself and you get in the 144, the thought of the Church going out into all the world through the ages: multiply this by God's perfect number, 1,000, and you get the thought of the whole community of those made one with God in Christ in its fulness and perfection. We find this number used again in xiv. 1, to express the whole body of the redeemed in Christ. The sealing of these takes place all through the history of the Church of God. Israel must not be taken to mean the nation of the Jews: this is shewn by the use of it as a symbol to speak of the whole people of God in xxi. 12, where it evidently includes all believers. The redeemed as a body are spoken of as Israel, for God chose out the Israelite people to be the stem into which the Church Catholic should be grafted. The mention of the separate tribes seems to make us think how each part of the Church has its own special contribution to give to the glory of God; but it seems impossible to fix upon the meaning of the order in which they are mentioned. Dan is omitted, perhaps because its emblem was a serpent, recalling the fall of one of the Apostles from grace. Levi, the priestly tribe, is included, though it does not generally appear in the list of the tribes, 4 to 8. We have seen the sealing of the servants of God upon earth, as the working out of God's purpose for His Church: now we have a second part of the same vision shewing us the redeemed in heaven, as seen by man. It is, however, the same company that we see. From man's point of view they are a great multitude which no man can number. The passage seems to recall the scene of St. John xii. 12, where we read of the multitude coming out of Jerusalem with palms of festal joy to wel-

come their King on His entrance into the Holy City. 9. Their great voice shews the intensity of their thanksgiving and praise. They ascribe their salvation to God and the Lamb, offering all they are and will be to the glory of God. 10. As we look out from the centre of the Throne we see first the twenty-four Elders representing mankind redeemed in Christ, then the Living Creatures representing the creation of God as a whole, and then around them a great multitude of Angels. Here Angels seem to enter more fully into the joy of God and His people than in Chapter v. 11, for they fall down before the Throne in adoration. They are in covenant with God and worship the Holy Trinity, but they give no special act of worship to Jesus as the Redeemer, for Angels have not been loosed from their sins in His Blood, 11, 12. In Chapter vi. it was Creation as a whole that called out for God's judgments to be shewn on earth for the destruction of sin: here it is the redeemed Church of God which proclaims the answer to the sadness of Creation in the triumphant joy of the redemption. St. John's attention is called to consider the meaning of this triumphant joy; he is asked who they are that thus triumph. 13. The Prophet answers that the full meaning is known to the Church as a whole, which alone can answer the question, for it is in the Church on earth that the great drama of redemption has been worked out. and the Church replies that as our Lord in His great victory "came" out triumphant, so the great multitude is made up of those who, being one with Him, share in His victory, for with Him they have come out of the great tribulation, which darkens the whole of the world's history; their character (" robes ") is cleansed, not merely by the water of the old covenant, but by the life-blood of the Christ: they

are seen as shining with the dazzling light of love and holiness. 14. So they are found worthy to find their true home and their perfect satisfaction in the presence of God, for they are in Christ who was ever with God (St. John i. 1, literally "towards God"). They are full of such active service of God in His Temple of the Universe as fills them with interest, and is their perfect rest.

"Heaven in a place where souls in ceaseless struggle
Strive in a conflict which is perfect peace."

God spreads His Tent (Tabernacle) over them in the joyful feast of Tabernacles, which is the Harvest Home of the ingathering of the world. Our Lord first tabernacled in our humanity (St. John i. 14, "tabernacled in us"): now His divine humanity is God's tabernacle in which the children of God dwell. 15. During the first stage of our life nothing can satisfy us fully: but hereafter there will be full satisfaction of our whole nature. Here the full sunshine of God's revelation is more than we can bear: hereafter it will be our greatest joy to know it more and more. 16. For Jesus, who loved on earth to speak of Himself as the good Shepherd of the Children of God, fulfils hereafter all that such a thought can mean; He guides us into ever fresh gifts of the Holy Spirit: and God, the Almighty Ruler of all shall so care for His children as to visit each with His perfect Mother love to console and comfort the heart and mind which on earth was sore troubled with the wearisome contest against sin and the bearing in Christ the sorrows of the world. 17.

CHAPTER VIII.

The revelation of judgment on a godless world in

the vision of the Seals was broken off after the sixth Seal to make way for a vision in which our Lord assures His people that He does not forget their anxiety in the midst of the troubles which are to come upon the world: He has marked them for His own and comforts them with this knowledge in the midst of the great tribulation (Chapter vii.).

Now we are called back to the opening of the Seventh Seal, and become conscious of a time of waiting in which the thunders, lightnings, and voices from the Throne have ceased. God's "hour" has not yet struck. In the silence there rises before us the vision of Angels with Trumpets, which call to us to worship, to move forward and to fight with our Lord in the battle of God. The Angels represent our Lord in His manifold judgment. 1, 2. But the seventh Seal has something of its own to shew us; it shews us what it is that moved the will of God to this fresh judgment. It is the constant prayer of our Lord and His Church. Our Lord, as the great Intercessor, represented by an Angel form, possesses to the full God's great gift of prevailing prayer, and our prayers are of avail when joined with His. He stands at the heavenly Altar, the golden Altar, where the incense of prayer is ever kindled by the live coals from the Altar of Sacrifice. To Him arise the prayers of God's children on earth, and He offers them with His own. In the first four seals it was Nature, and in the fifth Seal it was the Saints departed which cried out to God to come and judge the world; now it is the prayers of our Lord and His people which call for the fresh manifestation of judgment. 3, 4. The answer to these prayers is seen first in the resumption of the thunders, lightnings, and voices from the Throne, and in the shaking of the world as by a great spiritual

earthquake, when the fire from the Altar of sacrifice and prayer is poured out upon the earth. With this the judgment of the Trumpets begins—a judgment which enters more deeply into the inner life of man than that of the Seals. 5. The judgment is in God's hands, and its ministers wait for His appointed time. 6. The first judgment is on "the earth," the world which chooses to live and act in independence of God. It refuses the gentle rain of God's grace, which would foster the growth of all natural and spiritual good in them ; so the rain becomes a destroying hail. It refuses the fire of the Holy Ghost, which would cleanse it from sin by the burning of love ; so the fire becomes a fire of judgment, of love rejected and spurned, which burns up the souls of men. As God's grace comes to us in the life-blood of the Christ offered to us, so the hail and fire are seen now mingled in the blood of lives spilt uselessly on earth. Yet in this too, God's hand is seen, and we are sure therefore that the judgment is in accordance with love, for we see the number of God in the "third" part that is destroyed. The "earth" is the ungodly world as a whole ; the "trees" the associations of men that grow out of it ; the "grass" the natural virtues which belong to it. 7. The second Trumpet gives the judgment on the world as a tossing, restless "sea" of sinful wills of men and evil spirits. Into it is cast such a great "mountain" from the earth, burning with fire, as the false and deadly Prussian doctrine of the year 1914. God permits such evil to work its deadly effect, in the world becoming to a great extent full of effort and sacrifice and life-giving which are not a living sacrifice to God, but just blood spilt on earth. 8. Great numbers of men, even of those who have some spiritual life in the midst of sinfulness, lose it. Many

associations of men, which ride upon the waters of a sinful world and trade upon it, are spiritually destroyed. 9. The third Trumpet tells of judgment upon the thought and wisdom of a world permeated by sin. There is for it no rising of the Sun of righteousness, but a star fallen from heaven, the organizer of the kingdom of evil. Satan has no gift of the Holy Spirit, who makes the wisdom of earth live, but he has power to enter into and turn to wrong the rivers of men's social traditions and ideals, and that which in them should be well-springs of truth and right. 10. The bitter waters of Marah were made pure and wholesome by the casting in of a tree; the thoughts of the world were redeemed from sin by the Tree of Calvary: but the evil-spirit star turns the waters of men's thoughts into deadly water, which kills the souls that drink of it. 11. The fourth Trumpet brings the last of the scenes on earth, and the worst. The Sun of righteousness is eclipsed: the "Moon" of the faith of Christ's Church, and the light of the lives of holy men are darkened. The dwellers in the City of God have the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb as the Light thereof: but in the city of sin there is no light by day or night—in the hearts of those who have the truth and reject it, and in those from whom the truth is quite hidden by the sin of the world. It is an Egyptian darkness, caused by refusing the true Light. 12. The "eagle" which belongs to earth and yet in its high flight can get a far-range view of things on earth, is moved to cry a great woe upon the godless world for the judgments which are yet to come. 12.

These four judgments take place on the earth itself; the three next in the unseen world, showing the constant action of the kingdom of evil spirits lying behind, and working in, the evil amongst men.

It is well to remember that our Lord died for all, and that God wills all men to be saved and waits upon each individual soul to turn it from darkness to light.

CHAPTER IX.

At the sounding of the Trumpet of the fifth Angel we are called to see the evil spiritual forces which lie behind the fact of sin, and to know that God allows them to bring their hatred of God, and of man whom He made in his own image, to bear on the world.

We see a star fallen out of heaven to the earth. It is Satan, to whom heaven has become his hell, but who finds a place on earth in working on the wills of men who give themselves to him. Jesus is the morning Star of light and new life and hope: Satan is the fallen star of darkness and spiritual death and despair. Our Lord speaks of him as "the prince of this world." There is given to him the "key of the pit of the abyss." It is seen as the deep shaft of a well, an Eastern well with a locked cover. 1. The well is opened and there comes out such a thick, black smoke that the sun is shrouded and the air darkened: the light of the Christ is shrouded by spiritual darkness, and the atmosphere of God's presence can no longer be felt. 2. The Seer looks and the darkness seems to be full of shapes which remind him of the locust plagues, which have always to the Prophets of the O. T. been a type of terrible destruction. They can but be pictures of evil spirits penetrating the atmosphere of the world. 3. They have no power over the natural virtues and graces and good things which

God has planted in the very nature of his Creation; they cannot destroy the rooting of our natural life in what is good; but in the souls of men who do not acknowledge God, and whom God cannot claim as His own, they can find their sphere of action. 4. They cannot themselves kill the souls of men, but they can sting them with the poison of sin, and so put them to the test (this is the first meaning of the Greek word translated "torment") during a time of trial signified by the number five. The natural locust has no sting; so the thought of the scorpion's sting is added. 5. The strain will be so great that they who are but men, and have not become children of God, shall long for life to be extinguished in them; and yet find that they must pass through their full probation. 6. The locust in nature has the likeness of a horse, and that suggests the thought of the evil spirits on earth being an army with signs of countless victories over the grace of God in the souls of men. They have the appearance of men's faces, for it is through men that they work. 7. The locust's antennæ are like long hair, and suggest the thought of the evil spirits cajoling men by the lusts of the flesh: yet in truth they attack souls with lion fierceness. 8. As the locust has hard scales, to ward off attack, so the spirits can be conquered by no mere human weapons: and they are spiritually seen as an ordered host going out to battle in the world. 9. But we come back to the thought of the scorpion-like sting of sin inflicted, as they pass by, on souls which are not sealed by God. 10. As the hosts of God have Jesus as their Saviour so the hosts of sin have their commander-in-chief in Satan, whose name in Hebrew and Greek is here given as "the Destroyer." As our Lord is God's messenger who opens to us the kingdom of

heaven, so Satan opens out the pit of the abyss, which is the kingdom of evil. 11. Again there comes the solemn warning of the terrible nature of the revelation of what the contest of evil against good really means. 12. The voice which calls out for the full manifestation of evil, that at last the great conquest of evil may come, is heard from the Altar of prayer—is the voice of our Lord the Intercessor and His people, calling for the judgment. 13. The land of God promised to Abraham was bounded on the North-east by the river Euphrates. The river was their defence from their principal enemies, the Assyrians. This seems to point to an attack of the spirits of evil upon the Church of God: not the true children of God, but on professing Christians who have never claimed their true position, but are a mere borderland, of the kingdom of God. We may think of the "four" Angels as representing our Lord's work now on earth. 14. The "hour" of God's appointment is come, which shall dawn at its appointed day and month and year. Under the last Trumpet the enemy could not kill the souls of men: now the judgment is God's act (the "third" part) and souls die, 15. It seems as if the armies of evil spirits which were seen before as a horde of locusts, are now seen as horses carrying men as their riders; but it is the terror inspired by the horses of which we hear. 16. The breastplates of the horses flash with the colour of the fire, smoke and brimstone which are the foam out of their mouths. Perhaps this represents the power of evil as scorching, choking and suffocating the souls of men 17, 18. The dream is indeed a strange one: instead of tails of the horses are seen serpents with fangs: the immediate attack passes by, but the poison of sin is left in the soul. 19. A godless world has seen the effect of

sin in its destroying of the nature that God created for good in His own image : but this does not lead them to repentance ; they bow down to evil spirits, and set up all sorts of human idols in the place of God, idols which can never be living. 20. They repent not of the evil within them by which God's image in them is defaced. 21.

NOTE.—This is probably the most difficult chapter in the whole book to interpret. The symbols used come from the imagery of the Old Testament Prophets (for instance, look at Isaiah viii. 5 to 8 for the interpretation of " Euphrates "). Take it that what has been put down is a humble attempt to bring out the meaning, which may in many things be mistaken. In verse 16 S. John is led to emphasise the number of the horsemen. The meaning seems to be that the visitation is complete from man's point of view (10) and from God's (1000) ; and that it is God's witness to a godless world (" twice ").

CHAPTER X.

Before the seventh " Seal " of the first series of judgments was opened we had the great vision of comfort to the children of God in Chapter vii. So now before the seventh " Trumpet " we have two visions dealing with the position of the people of God in relation to the world which is under judgment—in Chapters x and xi., 1 to 13.

An Angel appears, a Strong Angel, coming out of heaven, clothed with a cloud, with the rainbow over his head, with face as the sun, with feet as pillars of fire. All these expressions have been used in the Book to tell of the character of our Lord, especially in connection with Him as judge of man. So we think of the Angel as

representing our Lord in His character of Judge. 1. Our Lord signifies now that He has a message for His people to give to the world, a message of God's judgments on the kingdom of sin which penetrates and destroys the true life of the world. In Chapter iv. we heard of the Book of the purposes of God for the world, which our Lord alone was able to take and to open. Here we have a "little book," a revelation of His purpose to His servant John, and to His Church. Standing upon the "sea" and the "earth", He is seen as about to deal strongly with the tossing restless world of sin, and with those who renounce dependence on God. 2. He cries now with a terrible cry, while the whole thunder of further judgments to come is heard. 3. But they are more than man can bear to hear of, and the Seer is told that, even though he could grasp their import, he is not to make it known. 4. Yet the judgments implied in the Thunders will not be long delayed. There shall be "delay" no longer (Margin of R.V.). We often in the Bible have the symbolic expression, "the right hand of God": here we have the right hand of the Angel who represents the Christ speaking with the authority of God. 5, 6. The judgment shall find its fulfilment when the time foreshadowed in the seventh "Trumpet" shall have come. Then the "mystery" or "revelation" of God shall be fully accomplished, even the "Gospel" (good tidings) of God's love for man and His destruction of the forces of evil, which He has spoken of through inspired men ("Prophets") from the beginning. 7. As our Lord could take the Book of the whole of God's purposes for His creation in Chapter iv., so the Church is bidden to take the "little book" and to assimilate it in its life. 8. The message of the "little book," the message of God's love for man,

is indeed most sweet ; but this very love implies the bitterness of the thought of the fate of those who reject the message of love. Note that it is the Seer himself who is moved to ask for the revelation of the purposes of God. 9, 10. Through the Seer there comes to the Church the bidding to go on uttering to the world its testimony to the love of God, and the judgment against sin. It is to be preached to the whole world in its four-fold aspect. 11

CHAPTER XI.

Here we have the second of these visions of consolation.

From the unseen Lord there is given to the seer a measuring reed, to mark out that which is to be preserved in the midst of judgment ; but it is also like a "rod," for it marks out also that which is to be delivered to the rod of judgment. The Shrine and Altar of God and true worshippers are within the line of security, but there is a "court" of the Tabernacle (people who still hold the name of Christ and His Church), where a worldly spirit has entered, so that their religion falls quite short of the following of our Lord. This faithless court of the Church is left subject to the judgment. The world ("Gentiles") tramples the religion of Christ into the mire. In this, Satan is seen to be working. The time of trial and contest with evil is from God's point of view expressed as three and a half, the half of the number of God's covenant with man,—see verses 9 and 11, and xii., 14 ("a time, two times and half a time") : from Satan's point of view it is longer, forty-two months, as here and xiii., 5 : from

the point of view of men who find it a long protracted struggle it is a thousand, two hundred and sixty days (verse 3). We note that 1,260 days, 42 months and three years and a half are equal to each other. During this time of probation and tribulation the Church is to bear her witness, like John the Baptist, in a garb of penitence. "Two" seems to be all through the number of witness, as the Apostles were sent out two and two; so "my two witnesses" simply means the Church in her special capacity of witnessing to Christ. 1, 2, 3. The character of the Church as witness is spoken of in figures from Zech. iv. The Holy Ghost is in the Church—the source through which light comes, as oil is in the olive trees: the oil gives light in the Lampstand of the Holy Place as the Holy Spirit shines in the Sanctuary before God and in giving light to the world. 4. Our Lord's words in the mouth of His true Church are fire which consumes the enemies of our Lord and His Church (Jer. v., 14). 5. Our Lord, in His Church, has authority to punish the spiritual enemies of His people in withholding the gifts of grace from them, allowing the well-springs of truth to be undrinkable to them, as Moses turned the waters into blood, and permitting spiritual disease on earth. 6. The effect of true witness to the Christ at any time will be that the Anti-Christ spirit of the world will attack and kill the witnesses. As the world thought it had killed our Lord, so it will be with the true Church. It will be to all outward semblance disposed of. The city where its seeming death happens is a degenerate Christianity, which has submitted to the world. As it was Jerusalem, meant to be the city of God, which took on the characteristics of Sodom and Egypt, and hounded our Lord to death, so it is a false religion which is the scene of the

victory of the world over the faith in Christ. 7, 8. The world looks on the seeming dead carcase, and feels relieved, and holds festival over the destruction of real religion. They gloat over the body as a dead religion. and have no pity or shame. 9, 10. But Jesus rose from the dead, and in God's good time, true religion is seen after all to be living and it takes shape before the eyes of men as the Body of Christ ascending in a cloud, as our Lord ascended. 11, 12. Then great fear falls upon the world, which sees at last that it is the true life of man that they have neglected and persecuted. There is a great upheaval of worldly life. A judgment, full in its way, as shewn by the number 10, falls upon the city of false religion. We have read in the Epistles to the Church of "names of men" who have not defiled their robes: here in the Greek we read of "names of men" in a number indicating that they are those who were taken into covenant with God (seven), and shewing that is God's final judgment on sin (a thousand), whose spiritual life is now lost. The godless who look on at this destruction of false religion, are terrified, awed and subdued, but there seems to be no hint of their conversion. 13.

CHAPTER XI. 14.

God's creation, which we call "nature," is listening intently to the revelation of judgment on devils and men who have spoilt the work of God. It is its voice that we heard in the "woe" pronounced by the Eagle in vii. 13, before the three last Trumpets uttered their voices.

Looking on to ix. 12, we find that the first of the threefold woes has been uttered in the fifth Trumpet: the second woe is found in the sixth (ix. 13 to 21), but it is only after the visions of consolation in x. 1 to xi. 13, that we are told this; the third woe is in the Seventh Trumpet, which is now before us. 14. The sounding of the last Trumpet has a character somewhat like the opening of the seventh Seal. There (in viii. 3 to 5) we were surprised, after the terror of the sixth Seal (vi. 12 to 17), to find the judgment shewn from such a different point of view. We saw a vision of our Lord (represented by the Angel) ever living to make prayer, and offering the prayers of His servants on earth with His own, before the Throne of God. But we found that it was but a different point of view, for it is the prayers of our Lord and His people that call down God's judgments for the purifying of the world. We get the same sort of surprise here at the sounding of the seventh Trumpet. We see this "third woe" from the point of view of the triumph of the Christ over sin. Voices are heard in heaven, such voices as men have ever been able to hear indistinctly, telling of God's purpose for the rescue of His creation from sin. Now they are heard distinctly, telling that dominion over the world is now wholly in the hands of God and the Christ whom He has given to the world as its King. 15. The true Church of God is able to understand and to re-echo that of which the voices tell. It bows down in loving worship and sings the song of the next two verses. 16. They worship God with the deep thanksgiving of those who have believed in and longed for the triumph of the Christ and the destruction of sin. We note that they speak of the Christ as He who "is and was," but no longer as "He who cometh," for in this scene He has now "come." 17.

The godless ("nations") are excited to fiercer rage than ever against God, with no sign of conversion, though they are face to face with God, manifested in His "wrath." They are judged as spiritually dead. Those others, who receive the reward, which is "life," are spoken of as Prophets, for they have borne witness to God; God's consecrated ones ("saints"); and they who have treated the revelation ("name") of God with Holy Fear. They speak of the justice of God in destroying those who destroy the earth. 18. Lastly the shrine, which is the heart of the Loving God, is revealed, and in it is seen His covenant with man, His great purpose for His creation. Yet this very covenant of God's love is the measure of man's sin, and the vision of it is followed by the signs of judgment. 19.

CHAPTER XII. TO VERSE 6.

In chapter xv. 5 to the end of xvi. we shall have to face the most awful of the revelations of judgment in the vision of "The Bowls." But we have to be prepared for this by being told of the evil which lies behind and is primarily responsible for the sin of the world. We are introduced to a mocking parody of the three Persons of the most Holy Trinity, the dragon, the first beast and the second beast. The dragon is the leader and organiser of rebellion against the will of God, and it is of Him that we read in this chapter.

First we have presented to us the vision of God's eternal purpose to raise His creature man into personal union with Himself. A Woman appears, surrounded by signs

which at once mark her intimate connection with the Incarnate Son of God. She is arrayed with the Sun, which shews His character as the Sun of Righteousness; she has the moon, the sign of the Church of Christ, beneath her, as if she had risen out of it: she is crowned with twelve stars which stand for the Church in her union with God (3 multiplied into 4) giving guidance to the world. Truly the first thought about the woman is right—that the Holy Mother of God is in mind; but there is more than that, for she herself becomes the sign of the ideal Church of God, ready in God's most loving purpose to produce the man who is the Son of God. 1. If this purpose were to be fulfilled, it was needful that there should be the long and painful travail of the ages, before the Incarnation could take place, while the world was learning to receive the Saviour who should come. 2. Now evil had existed in the spiritual region even before the creation of man. In the vision it is seen in its deadly opposition to God's purpose, as a great and formidable dragon, red with the colour of blood, as one who would kill by the deadly poison of sin the Incarnate Son and all who would follow Him. So we see him waiting for the Incarnation of the Son of God, that he may tempt and cause Him to sin. He has cleverness, power and authority ("heads, horns, diadems"); his cleverness and authority are marked by the number seven, suggesting that he has a covenant with his followers, as God has a covenant with His children; his power is marked with the "ten" which speaks of a limited completeness. The Woman has the crown of victory; he has but the diadem which denotes authority given him to do his worst for a time. 3. The dragon draws out of heaven a third part of the angelic beings who should have been as stars of heaven in brightness. They find

refuge in the spirit of evil men on earth, and are busy in drawing them away from their allegiance to God. The mention of a "third" part seems to imply that they are restrained by the mightier power of God. So the dragon takes up the attitude of relentless hatred against God's purpose of the Incarnation. 4. We come now to the event of the Incarnation: but still we see it through the eyes of heaven. There is born the son of Mary, who is God the Son, with all the strength and possibility which belongs to unsullied manhood perfectly indwelt by God. He is to shepherd with supreme power all the nations who refuse the rule of God. During the thirty years of His preparation for His ministry He so lives by the grace of God as to be at the same time on earth and in heaven. We remember that later He speaks of Himself as "the Son of man who is in heaven." 5. But what of the Woman, the ideal Church of God of which the Holy Virgin of Nazareth is a sign? As Elijah found refuge from the evil designs of Ahab and Jezebel in being called by God into communion with Himself in the wilderness, so Mary, the Mother of God, finds herself safe from the attack of sin in her unceasing living with God on earth: and in this wilderness the true Church of Christ is to find her refuge through the ages. It seems a long time, all those long days which have to be lived in face of temptation and probation: we have seen in xi. 3 how this time of trial is from Satan's point of view 42 months; and from God's point of view three and a half years, the number which is the half of the covenant number, seven, and signifies a time of trial and tribulation until the promises of the covenant can be fulfilled. 6.

In verses 7 to 12 we pass to the great conflict between the Christ and the dragon, when His manhood is perfected to take up the contest. The contest is in the spiritual region, but that may be on earth, for our Lord was ever in heaven while with us on earth. In Michael ("Who is like God?") we see an Angel form representing the Christ in His conflict against all the power of evil, the kingdom organised in opposition to His. The result is final; the victory of good over evil is complete; the heavenly places are purged from the poison of sin. 7, 8. There is still a region of human wills which do not submit to the rule of God, where the power of evil is allowed to work. There the leader of the forces of evil appears as the slanderer of God ("devil"), the adversary of good ("Satan"), the deceiver of the whole inhabited earth. Here in the region of depraved wills he finds a limited scope; he can force no one, but he can deceive; that is his weapon. There is with him a host of fallen spirits who own him as lord. 9. The victory of the Christ is hailed with a song of joy and thanksgiving in heavenly places—in the unseen and in this world. Saving grace, the conquering power of truth and holiness in the kingdom of God, the joy in Christ, the Son of God, as Lord and King of men—these are the thoughts which inspire the shout of praise. Satan's mockery of God for the weakness of man is utterly discounted, for in Christ is seen true man according to the purpose of God. 10. But in Christ are seen the countless thousands of those who overcome Satan because of the sacrifice of the Christ, which has assured them of holiness; they have borne witness to the Christ in their lives; they have staked their lives on their faith. 11. So there is indeed joy in the heavenly places of earth and heaven; but there is woe to those

who will not accept the rule of God ("earth"), for Satan has but a short time to carry out his wicked will, and will use every means which his long experience and his cleverness put at his disposal. 12.

So we pass to the third scene. The Woman now becomes the Church of history. The power of evil has ever pressed upon her in conflict. The story of the Church tells of evil sometimes getting very near her heart; but thank God, she lives. 13. God gives her the power to escape from defeat in renewed devotion, where God nourishes her with heavenly food during the time of her tribulation. 14. Even in her devotion she is pursued by the river of false doctrines and countless lies, by which Satan would drown her spiritual life. 15. But strangely enough it is the godless world which comes to her rescue in providing a channel which draws off the full force of the flood of lies, passing for truth. 16. In his defeat the dragon falls into a paroxysm of rage. He goes off to attack those who are not yet really living in heavenly places in Christ, though they are of the children of God by new birth, and live a moral life, and even are in their way witnesses to the Christ. 17. The dragon organises the new attack. He takes his stand, as it were upon the sea shore, looking out upon the world in its character of a tossing sea of sin. Chapter xii. 1a.

(The "wings of the great eagle" of verse 14 may denote the natural powers of devotion and communion with God, which raise the children of God into the heavenly places in Christ.)

CHAPTER XIII.

God the Father in His love for the world sent His Son to us to save the world : Satan in his hatred of God and of man who is made in the image of God sends his messenger, the first beast, a wild beast, of fierce destructive rage. Our Lord is the Prince of the kingdom of God, the first beast is prince of the kingdom of evil in the hearts of men (" the sea "). What we notice first is the power (" ten horns "), then the seven heads which speak of his cleverness in his dominion over his followers. Our Lord is described as " having many diadems "—tokens of sovereignty given to Him by God ; the beast has a limited sovereignty (" ten diadems "). 1. In chapter iv. our Lord's presence in the natural creation is spoken of through the appearance of the Four Living Creatures ; the character of the beast as shewn on earth is spoken of under the figure of the swift, cruel spring of the leopard, the relentlessness of the bear, the devouring power of the lion. As our Lord is manifested through His human nature, so the beast is manifested through a debased and distorted humanity. Our Lord in His temptation refused to receive from Satan the power, throne and authority offered to Him : the beast accepts them at the cost of being the dragon's slave and sharing his fate. 2. Our Lord was sacrificed upon the Cross and raised from the dead to take up His great power and reign ; the beast received a deadly stroke from the work of the Christ, but has his own parody of resurrection in being allowed still for a time to retain his place as, in our Lord's own words, " the Prince of this world." The world wonders that the deadly blow seems to have been healed and follows after the beast who seems to hold his own against

the Christ. 3. What then is this mocking parody of the Christ? There can be no doubt from what follows that it is the world which refuses to live in dependence upon God; the strong, rough power which despises religion; here it is seen as the human body of the first beast. As Christians worship God and Jesus Christ, so the "world" worships the power of evil and his messenger on earth. The words are a parody of the adoration of God and the Lamb at the end of Chapter v. 4. Our Lord is marked with the "name" (revelation) of God; on the heads of the beasts are names of blasphemy (verse 1): our Lord speaks the word of God; the beast speaks blasphemies against God, God's revelation of Himself, the Christ who tabernacled amongst men, and the members of His kingdom. 6. He is allowed by God to make war against the members of Christ, even if he overcomes them, and his authority covers the range of the whole world. 7. The ungodly ("dwellers on the earth") are distinguished from "those who dwell in heaven." Their names are not written in the roll of the citizens of the kingdom of heaven. They worship this world-power and not God. 8. The solemn call to listen recalls the same words used by our Lord on earth, and repeated in His message to the Church in Chapters ii. and iii. 9. There remains a word of consolation to the people of God. It is God's judgment working out in it all, a law implanted in our nature, that they who act in an evil way, which hurts others, shall themselves fall under the evil they would inflict. The assurance of God's judgments behind all sin and evil is a ground for patience and faith in the members of the kingdom of God. 10.

The second emissary of the dragon is another "beast"—a mocking parody of God the Holy Ghost, as the first beast is of our Lord. As our Lord appears out of the Kingdom of God, so the second beast is seen appearing out of the world which refuses to live in its true dependence upon God ("the earth"). As the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Christ, bringing home His character to man, so the second beast seems to have the character of the lamb of sacrifice, and to give witness to that character ("two" "horns" give the idea of witness and power); but its utterances shew it to be in sympathy with the dragon. This leads us to think where on earth we find such a character, and the only conclusion here and further on in the book can be that we find it in those who profess the faith in Christ, but who fail to live the life which He demands from us—it is in fact the character of false religion. We shall notice that, of the enemies of our Lord and His true children, this is the most dangerous. 11. The spirit of false religion acts upon worldly motives (not on the teaching of Jesus), and its authority is truly worldly, a following of the first beast, who directs it, as our Lord directs the work of the Holy Ghost: it leads to a worship of the spirit of the world (see verse 3) by those who reject their utter dependence on God. 12. As the Holy Ghost works His signs of power in those who give themselves to Him, so does the spirit of false religion. The Holy Spirit came in tongues of fire at Pentecost; the evil spirit gives supernatural signs to mislead men. (We seem to see such signs in the false spiritualism of the present day). 13. The nature of such signs is to deceive men, to make them reject the sternness of true religion. The Holy Spirit leads men to the worship of the Son of God Incarnate; the evil spirit leads men

to worship the spirit of the world. 14. The Holy Spirit created the living Body of Christ, His image, His Church, to guide and rule the lives of men into the truth that "he that hath not the Son of God hath not life"; so the spirit of false religion forms a parody of the Church: it organises and gives life to a body of false religion which centres round, not the Christ, but the spirit of the world, and it casts out of its fellowship all who will not accept this spirit. 15. The Holy Spirit marks with the sign of the Holy Cross men of every class and station whose heart God leads to Him; so the evil spirit marks in their actions ("right hand") and in their thoughts ("forehead") all those whom God gives over to it, because they will not accept the mark of the Christ. 16. They who refuse the revelation ("name") of the Christ, and the principles of that revelation ("number of His name") are excluded from the social life of the Kingdom of God: so they who reject the revelation and principles of the world apart from God are excluded from the worldly advantages which the world can give. 17. What then are the principles of the kingdom of this world apart from God? Man can know and understand. They are a parody of the principles of the Christ. The Christ is He who brings on earth the principles of a new Kingdom of God. Rising on the eighth day from the dead, He goes on beyond the idea (shewn in the number 7) of man making covenant with God, and brings us by a new birth into the spiritual kingdom of God: it was also on an eighth day—the day which begins a *new week*—that He gave life to His Church on Whitsunday. And now see the sign of this. The Greek language has no separate numerals, but uses letters for numbers; and the Greek name of Jesus makes the number 888, and marks His

revelation as the giving of new life from God. So on the other hand the number which falls always short of the covenant with God (the number 7) is 6, and the number of the spirit of the world is 666. As our Lord and His disciples live in the forward, upward movement indicated by the number 8, so the first beast and his followers ever fall short of God's demands and are characterised by the number 6. 18.

CHAPTER XIV.

In Chapters xvi. to xviii. we have a final vision of the judgments of God against His enemies who have given themselves to oppose the purpose of His boundless love and wisdom for this world : we have been preparing for this in chapters xii. and xiii. by the revelation of the anti-Trinity of hell, the dragon, the first beast (the lord of the spirit of the world), and the second beast (the lord of false religion) : in xiv. and xv. we are given visions to assure the true children of God of the security of those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus, and of the destruction of the sin which destroys the world.

Jesus is seen taking His stand upon His true Church, the holy Mount of God ; as in Chapter xv. 2. We see His true children standing upon a purified world. He appears in the character of the Lamb of God, the prevailing offering for the sins of the world. With Him stand the people in Whom God dwells, His faithful ones of past, present and future (for interpretation of the number see Chapter vii. 4). The revelation of God fills their

thoughts, for they have found God in all things. 1. The Seer listens, and they listen, and hear music so full of meaning that it can be compared to the manifold voice of the waters, of seas and rivers and springs and rain ; while yet there is a warning thundering of judgment : but it is more than that, for it is the voice of souls utterly rejoicing in the fullness of the presence of God (the harp seems to represent the beautiful harmony of a life in God).

2. The song is new to those who enter the heavenly places from this world. It is God and His redeemed creation and the Church of God, that hear the song of the heavenly ones. Only the redeemed, purchased out of the earth by the sacrifice of the Lamb of God, can learn the song. 3. The redeemed are souls, presented as pure virgins to Christ, the Church which is the pure Bride of Christ. Their religion means to them that they have been called by Jesus to follow Him to the Cross, the Resurrection and the Ascension, and follow Him for ever. Their glory is that they are the first-fruits of the whole creation which through them has been hoping to attain to the liberty of the glory of the children of God. There is no false pretence about their position, for they are without blemish before the Throne of God. 4, 5. Standing in spirit amongst the true followers of the Lamb, the Seer is shewn a vision of Angels, who represent the Christ in His work of judgment upon the ungodly world, while in the midst of the vision (verse 14), the Christ is seen in person, gathering the Harvest of redeemed souls. The first angel appears from the heaven, the abode of truth and righteousness, to proclaim the eternal supremacy of truth to those who have made the earth their throne, and not the heaven which God has prepared for them (" sit upon the earth "). It is a universal message to all

who have refused the love of the Christ. 6. Even out of their unbelieving minds they are called to fear and give glory to God. The "hour" of God's judgment has struck. At the least they are called to bow their heads before the majesty of the Creator of the universe in which they live. 7. The second angel proclaims that the city of false religion, that which should have been Jerusalem, the City of God, but is become Babylon, the noted enemy of God's city, the deceitful spirit which led the world into her own departure from the Living-God, is fallen, fallen with an utter fall. 8. The Third Angel tells of the fate of each soul that worships the spirit of the world, and receives its mark on its thoughts and actions in place of the sign of the holy Cross. 9. These, who refused the wine of the Blood of Christ, are made to drink of the wine of God's wrath. The Wine of the Chalice is mingled wine and water: but the wine of God's wrath in the chalice of His anger is unmixed. The fire which should have cleansed man becomes the fire which tortures him; the light of God is hidden from him by the sulphurous emanations of his own thoughts. The Angels and the Lamb are called to witness the awful horror of sin as it is at last revealed in its true aspect. 10. It is said that the smoke goes up for "ages of ages." It looks as if this need not be translated "for ever and ever," as it is in our Bible. It was said in Chapter iv. that Creation, as represented by the four "living creatures," has "no rest" in its service of most joyful praise; so they who willingly set up their earthly ideal to follow for ever, and allow themselves to receive the mark of the beast, have "no rest" in their voluntary service. 11. But faithful servants of Jesus have to live in the midst of the powers of evil. The knowledge that evil is being conquered

is to keep them firm in the patience that they need. The "saints" are all the faithful children of God. 12. Many of them will pass through persecution and martyrdom and countless others will be martyrs in spirit: this is their "death in the Lord," and it is full of blessing to them: they rest from their toil and suffering which they have here below, because their character and life follow them and enable them to find and enjoy the true rest here and in their entry into heaven. 13. But here the Christ in person appears upon the white cloud. He Himself in His teaching associates His final coming with the clouds of heaven. He has on His head the golden crown which denotes a life lived for the glory of God and triumphant. It is as man that He is seen. He sits as Judge. 14. Then we have a vision of three other Angels. The first brings to our Lord a message from the Father that the hour for the harvest of the earth is come, though God has waited even beyond the time. 15. Then we see the harvest which is the gathering into heaven of God's true children. 16. The next Angel comes out from the place of God's presence, ready to begin the gathering of the vintage of the ungodly. He acts under our Lord according to the will of God. 17. The last Angel comes out from the Altar, where our Lord presents His prayers and those of His people before the Throne. The fire of judgment, which we saw in Chapter viii. 3—5. to be the result of those prayers, is seen working under the charge of the Angel, and He calls for the judgment of Christ upon the wicked, which is now seen. 18, 19. The earthly vine, which is a parody of the Vine which the Father has planted on earth (St. John xv.), is completely rooted up and cast into the winepress of the just wrath of God. 20. Our Lord suffered "without

the gate " of the city of God, Jerusalem ; so the great judgment of the ungodly is outside the bounds of the heaven in which God's children are gathered. The juice of the vintage is seen in blood, not the blood which is offered to God, but life spilt uselessly in sin. The horses of Christ and His victorious ones rise out above the flood. We see left to their destruction the people whose number is not the 144,000 of the redeemed, but is denoted by the number of the world, which cannot rise above itself, multiplied into itself and finding a perfection of its own which is not the 1000 of God's perfection ($4 \times 4 \times 100$). 21.

(It seems worth while to suggest that, as we saw in the last Chapter the anti-Trinity of evil, so here we see in the three Angels of verses 6, 8 and 9, and those of verses 15, 17 and 18, representatives of the Three Persons of God, overthrowing the work of each person of the trinity of evil.

2. Verse 19. R.V. margin gives "vine" for "vintage").

CHAPTER XV.

Seven Angels are seen, ministers of God's judgments upon men who have failed to realize that men must enter into covenant with God and keep their covenant with Him ; for God's last and most terrible judgment is to be shewn to us (7 is the number which speaks of our covenant with God). 1. But, before we see the judgments, we are again assured that they do not touch those who have taken refuge from a sinful world in the kingdom of the Christ. The tossing restless sea of a sinful world has to them become crystal-clear, undimmed now in

its beauty, for it is mingled with the fire of God's love, which purifies it from all sin : the whole company of the redeemed is seen standing upon it, no longer submerged in it, but living their true life in the full presence of God. They have come victorious out of the influence of the spirit of the world and of false religion, and have escaped the mark of the beast upon their lives. Their life is in tune with God and gives forth its heavenly music. 2. They sing the song of God's work of perfect love, the story of His training of a people of God in the Israelite Church and of its consummation in the work of our Lord, as the great sacrifice for sin. 3. They claim holy fear towards God, and that men should glorify His holiness and righteous acts. They are able to hope that every nation will have its contribution to give of worship to God, the centre of all being, when at last His righteous acts have been made manifest. 4. Then is given a vision in the heavenly temple, which is the heart of God, and in it is seen enshrined the spiritual and moral law of God by which men must be judged, God's testimony to man. 5. To carry out the demands of that law the seven Angels appear for judgment. The Angels represent our Lord in judgment. The High Priest of the old covenant entered into the Holy of Holies of the Temple bearing on his breastplate precious stones engraved with the names of the tribes of Israel : but our Lord, under the figure of the Angels is seen as clothed with one precious stone—His children who are all now one, and pure and bright. They shew His glory as Priest and King by the golden girdles. 6. The Living creatures in Chapter iv. represented all nature before God. It was they who called for the judgment of God in the vision of the Seals in Chapter vi. Now it is nature, expressing God's purpose in creation,

which gives the Bowls of the wrath of God into the hands of the Angels of the Plagues. In the old covenant sacrifices the blood of the victims was caught in golden bowls, part of which was sprinkled on the Altar to offer the sacrifice to God, and part was poured out as a libation at the foot of the Altar, to join the spring of water underneath the Altar, and to go out mingled with it as a sign of redemption going out into the world : now, redemption being rejected by men, the blood is seen as turned into the wrath of God against sin. 7. God cannot be approached at the moment when He is seen revealing Himself in the terrors of judgment. In the Holy of Holies the High Priest entered through the smoke of the incense, a symbol of the prayer of God's people : but now the smoke is dense and stifling, human power and prayer and worship neglected and abused. We seem to read of the Almighty love brought into a fearful solitary and final struggle against sin, which no human mind can follow. For long the patience of God has waited for man to turn to Him ; but the time of the probation of the world is ended. 8.

CHAPTER XVI.

In this vision of The Seven Bowls we seem to see the gathering up of the judgments of God upon a world whose time of opportunity has passed, for whom the day of repentance has ended. We find in it the same symbols as those used in the visions of the Seals and the Trumpets, but the whole idea is now intensified in a vision of deeper and more far-reaching judgment, the culmination of

all God's judgments upon sin : it reaches the evil spirits, whose malice has been ever fostering sin on earth.

The voice of God is heard from the innermost shrine, which is His own heart and will. We hear no longer of Angel representatives of the Christ as ministers of judgment : the time has come when God takes His own cause in hand. 1. The first visitation is on "the earth," those who have never learnt to live as children of God, but who are of the world, worldly, who have received the mark of the first beast as their spiritual lord : they have worshipped self and worldly success and ease. The love of God can find no place in their hearts and it has become the instrument of His wrath : it produces strange distortions of character in those who will not have it as love. The fulness of God's judgment is nothing else but the natural and necessary result of wills of men set to choose wrong. 2. The sea is the community of men who choose sin as their good : its tossing restlessness is the symbol of the bitter unrest and despair to which sin must lead. The general view of this sea of sinfulness is now marked by the thought of blood poured out uselessly on earth, the life which should have been offered with the Blood of the Christ in the Eucharist, but is just clotted blood, wasted lives of men : the whole sea is seen as dead blood, not blood which has risen with the Christ to new life : it has died to God and truth and life. Every "soul of life" died : no longer do we hear of "a third part" dying—for judgment is no longer restrained. 3. The ungodly and sinful world has its own "water;" it is not the water of life but its own ideals and doctrines. Even the half-truths which it holds—which would have become whole truths if they were brought into their true place in connection with the love of God—cannot save man,

for no real love can exist in the souls of those who reject the love of God. This water too becomes blood with no life left in it. We can but recall how Moses by God's command turned the water of the Nile into blood. 4. In the next three verses, in the midst of the judgment, we are reminded that there is no semblance of injustice or failure of love in it. The "waters" themselves speak through their representative Angel and acknowledge the righteousness and holiness of God. The Angel speaks with despair, for he speaks of God who is from eternity, and who has manifested Himself to man ("was") but we no longer hear of Him as "He that cometh," for He has come in this final judgment. 5. The Angel acknowledges the necessity that judgment must follow through men receiving the very evil which they have chosen. They who have chosen lies must have lies. If there is the possibility for the human heart and will so to choose God and truth as to be able to walk before God (iii. 4), so it must be possible for the heart and will so to choose evil as to be "worthy" of living in the atmosphere of evil. 6.

Again "the Altar" bears witness that God's judgments are altogether consistent with truth and justice—a justice which includes all possible mercy. For the Altar itself is a symbol of the mercy of God and the love by which He would make atonement for sin. This reminds us of the fifth Seal in Chapter vi., where the souls beneath the Altar, the Saints of the old covenant, call out for God to manifest Himself against sin. And the Altar itself must represent the infinite love of Jesus in His giving of Himself for us sinners to redeem us from the sin which must bring its awful penalties, if we refuse that redemption. 7. The "Sun" can but speak of the revelation

on earth of the truths of redemption, justification and sanctification in Christ, the Sun of righteousness. In the judgments of the Seals and Trumpets we read of this as being obscured : but now we are faced with a more complete judgment to meet the final refusal of God's mercy by man. The truth of Christ, shining out in full power, becomes itself the instrument of judgment : the truth of the Christ becomes more and more undeniable as the opposition to it becomes more obstinate. It is the refusal of this truth which is in itself the condemnation of men : it scorches the souls of men as with fire. It is as in our own times, in which denial of the fact of Christ has become very rare, and yet men do not give themselves to Him for salvation. 8. The effect of the clear shining of truth may produce, not conversion, but rather blasphemy against God : men harden their hearts and will give no place in them to repentance. 9. With the fifth Bowl, as with the fifth Seal and the fifth Trumpet, we pass into the unseen world : the throne of Satan in the heart of the spirits of evil is attacked. Darkness and pain sweep through the kingdom of the evil one, recalling the plague of darkness in Egypt in old days. When the world was created, light penetrated the mists of earth : now at the end of the days darkness can but overwhelm those who will not accept the light. The revelation of heaven carries with it " There shall be no more pain ;" that of hell " They gnawed their tongues for pain." As spirits have given themselves to share in the glory of the Christ, so spirits have given themselves to share in the judgment of the beast, who parodies Him. Note that each plague is not separate in time, but supposes the continuance of those spoken of before it. 10. Men may repent to give God glory in place of the glorifying of self, which

must end in hell (ix. 21), but the "repented not out of their works" of the evil spirits seem to speak of a still worse hell in them: they see the hopelessness of their position and feel the pain of it, they know that they have pursued a fancied good and rejected the true good, but they have no wish to abandon the evil which has brought them to such misery. 11. In ix. 14, we came to this sort of conclusion as to the meaning of "the Euphrates" as a symbol. The river was the boundary of the Israelite kingdom in its greatest glory: it should have been the defence of that kingdom: God desired to stay the hand of avenging Angels there, but in that judgment of the trumpets they are loosed to work destruction in the borders of the kingdom, in which the religion of Christ is held in name, but not followed. The same meaning suits here: the boundary disappears (the river is dried up): the part within the boundary lies open: false religion is left exposed; so the way is prepared for the "kings from the sunrising," the hosts of the Christ and true religion, to overrun it, destroying the false worshippers, who have debased the name of the Christ. 12. The strain of this revelation of judgments is so great that relief is given to the hearers before the fourth plague, which is the central point of the judgment, and before the seventh in which it culminates (5 to 7 and 13 to 16). Here then we are shown that it is evil spirits who are at the back of all the sin in the world: that it is they who lead the battle against God: but God Himself is the Leader of the hosts of good. We see again the anti-Trinity of evil, as in Chapters xii. and xiii. The dragon represents Satan as a parody of the Father; the first beast the spirit of the world, as parody of our Lord; the third beast, the spirit of false religion, parody of God the Holy Ghost, is shewn

more clearly now in that aspect by appearing as the false prophet, the spirit of a false religion which claims to speak the truth of God, but speaks falsely. As the Holy Spirit was manifested in the form of a Dove, so, under the form of frogs appears amongst men the croaking noisy offensiveness of spirits misleading men. 13. As round the person of our Lord there are seen the signs which God gave Him to work personally and through His Church, in His task of gathering up the forces of God and truth, so these evil spirits go forth with lying wonders to gather all that they can persuade for the final conflict of evil against God. No doubt we are not hearing of a sudden manifestation but what we read of may indeed be going on in the world to-day. The kings of the whole world would be they who by their example and teaching have great influence on the side of evil. 14. But in the midst of it all our Lord would say to us in the familiar phrases, which He used in Galilee and Judea, that the people of God must be watchful and ready at all times for His manifestation of Himself, and that they must keep themselves ever clothed with the Christian character. 15. Swift and utter destruction must finally be the lot of all those who take up battle against God: the kingdom of hate and sin, which do not correspond with truth, cannot finally stand against the kingdom of love and holiness in which all things are rooted. The unclean spirits of the kingdom of evil are seen to marshal their forces to battle; but the battle itself is not before us till xix. 19 to 21. Armageddon in Palestine became noted for great battles in which the armies of Israel's enemies were defeated: we can but remember that General Allenby's great victory over Turkish and German forces in the great war for the freedom of the world began on the same field of

Armageddon. The name is used here to signify the final victory of God over sin. 16. The seventh Bowl brings us in thought up to the time of the end of the world. The scene of the conquest of spiritual wickedness is in the unseen region between what we see and what we don't see ("the air"): Satan is called by St. Paul "the prince of the power of the air." We are told no details of a judgment which we could not yet understand, but we hear the voice of God saying that His purposes are accomplished: all the plagues are poured out; the end is reached. 17.

The shock of the conflict is felt on earth: there are the lightnings, thunders and voices which denote judgments of God upon the world: God comes "to shake mightily the earth" in a final and far greater judgment upon all that has refused the rule of eternal love. "The earth," which organized itself against God is seen to be ruined and dethroned. 18. The great kingdom of "the earth" used to seem so strong and united: but now it crumbles. The kingdom of the earth falls asunder into its three parts—the region of evil spirits; the region of the world which ignores God; the region of false and debased religion. These three enemies of the kingdom of God correspond with the three enemies which united to destroy Jesus on the Cross—the evil spirits; the Roman power; the debased religion of "the Jews." We have seen the judgment of the first in verse 17; now we are told of the fall of the cities of the nations, the "world:" and of Babylon, the city which might have been Jerusalem, but is become the enemy of God and His people. The worst enemy seems to be false religion, Babylon. 19. The institutions and societies of "earth," which seemed so strong, were in the Sixth Seal of Chapter

vi. moved out of their places : now they disappear and are no longer to be found. 20. The Grace of God comes as a gentle rain upon the earth, to nourish all good growth amongst men : but men have refused it and spurned it, and it has become the very instrument of judgment as huge frozen, destroying hailstones. And no longer is there room for repentance, for the time is passed ; it does but call out blasphemy. 21.

CHAPTER XVII.

We have seen before that the enemies of our Lord upon earth were three—Satan, the organizer of the power of evil ; the world, as represented then by the might of the Roman Empire ; and debased religion, as shewn by the Jewish Leaders who hounded Him to His death : and that the worst of these was the last. We see that the same enemies are ever attacking Him in His present rule over mankind : and here we find the doom of the worst enemy, the degenerate Church of Christ, which must disappear at His final coming. True children of God, the real Church of Christ, will have no dealings with false, worldly religion.

One of the Angels of our Lord's judgment shows the condemnation of unreal religion, spoken of as no longer a city of God ; it is a city which should have been all that Jerusalem might have been, but is become Babylon, the harlot city, instead of the Bride of Christ. She has given herself to the world instead of to Christ. She has her throne upon the many false doctrines ("waters"), but with no true rule. 1. She has allowed the great

ones of the world to share her life, and, in place of the Wine of life, which Jesus gives, has given men the wine of fornication, which draws them away from Him. 2. The Woman of Chapter xii. was carried into a wilderness, which meant a life of devotion with God, but a religion which is no religion is in a wilderness empty of God, love and truth. The scarlet beast on which this woman rides is the spirit of the world, the same as the first beast of Chapter xiii. False religion gives her sanction to and directs many things in the world which refuses the Christ. Purple was freely used in the hangings and vestments of the Tabernacle: it is a mixture of blue, the colour of God, and scarlet or red, the colour of man: here we seem to see the beast marked with the colour that speaks of human might standing by itself. Our Lord is the revealer of the one Name of God: the beast is marked all over with names of blasphemy, various revelations of the power which opposes God. 3. The Angels of judgment in xv. 6 were seen arrayed in precious stone, the knowledge of God; the woman here is arrayed in the purple of worship indeed, but with it the unmingled worldliness of scarlet, agreeing with the colour of the beast, and she is "gilded" (decked) with worldly glories, things of no spiritual value; and she offers to the world, not the Chalice of the Holy Sacrament, but the golden cup of her fornications with the world, a thoroughly worldly religion. 4. Her own name, her revelation of herself, is quite different from the "mystery" of which we heard in i. 20: there was the universal Church ruled by the Christ; here is the Church degenerate, claiming dominion for herself; she is seen now as the chief of harlots and the greatest of abominations, for she draws her followers away from God and truth. 5. As the Jews,

God's Church of old in its degeneracy, persecuted and killed the Christ and many of the Christians in the first age of the Church, so this spirit of false religion has always brought death to countless followers of Christ ; she has hounded on the world to such acts. 6. The Angel goes on to explain what St. John has seen, first the beast (8-14), then the woman (15-18). 7. The beast is the same as that of xiii. 1. : it is a parody of our Lord who was and is and cometh ; it was manifested in the evil on earth ; no longer exists as a sovereign power, being conquered by our Lord ; it is doomed to final destruction after it has been allowed freedom for a time. The beast is the spirit of the world, and the world wonders to see what power it still has, though conquered by Jesus : to the world it takes the place of our Lord, it is it that they worship as manifested on earth, seeming to be killed yet again manifesting itself. 8. There is a spiritual interpretation of these things : the seven heads of the beast are seven world-powers ("mountains" imply strong earthly powers), and the number 7 speaks of a covenant with the evil one binding them in one. 9. Here we seem to hear that great world kingdoms have represented these strongholds of earthly force : Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia and Greece might be the kingdoms which had been before the time of St. John ; the Roman Empire was the great power of his time ; whether the seventh has come now or is yet to come we cannot say. 10. It is not said here that the beast is about to come up out of the abyss, for it is already present—the power of evil after its conquest by our Lord is out for its last stage of power : and it seems that, after the seven kingdoms, there is a more personal reign of the beast on earth, for it is an eighth, the beginning of a new series. 11.

The ten horns of xiii. 1 are all the anti-Christian leaders who should arise out of the seventh kingdom after St. John's time, and should share in the reign of the spirit of the world ; God allows this, as He allows Satan to be the Prince of this world, for a time (" They receive their authority ") : but the time is in God's hands ; it is limited by God. 12. All these worldly powers, rejecting the rule of Christ, agree in acting as instruments of the evil world spirit. 13. Our Lord conquers, not by force of arms, but by sacrifice of Himself, and we are called by the same means to be with Him and to share in His victory. 14. We now get the description of the woman, the spirit of debased religion, who is carried upon the world spirit and for a time guides it. The harlot religion finds her sway over the thoughts of the whole world, which does not follow the Christ. 15. But the earthly powers under the evil world-spirit get too strong for her : they will no longer have her riding on them, but they hate her and strip her of her false glory : she is to be a wilderness ; they will absorb her into the world spirit : they will make a sacrifice of her to Satan, a parody of the whole burnt offerings offered to God. So was Jerusalem, the representative of such false religion, destroyed by the world power of Rome in the year 70. 16. And all this has been accomplishing the purpose of God, who would overrule evil for good. 17. The city of God should have held rule over all the powers of the world, but, since the people of God will have nothing to do with a religion which holds the name of Christ but will have none of His law, the worldly part of her has become Babylon and given up the ruling with Christ for ruling with the evil world spirit. 18.

CHAPTER XVIII.

The thought of the judgment on a spurious religion, which calls itself by the name of Christ, and yet does not really follow His example and teaching, is continued in this Chapter. The evil spirit which fosters it is the second beast of chapter xiii. otherwise spoke of as the false prophet. The degenerate religion on earth is called Babylon, the Harlot City, which has left Christ, her true Bridegroom, and is the false prophet and has committed fornication with the world. There are three parts of the chapter, the announcement of the city's fall (1—3), the lamentation of all who had been dependent on her (4—20), how complete and irremediable is her ruin (21—24.)

The Angel represents our Lord in very high degree, for he bears His authority, and in passing through earth from the presence of God he flings a broad belt of light across the darkness. 1. He speaks with a mighty voice which strikes all with awe and terror, proclaiming that false religion will no more deceive the world : it is changed into a hateful desert, a dwelling of demons, of unclean and hateful thoughts which are inspired by the spirit of evil. 2. It should have been the bride of Christ, but has committed continual fornication with the powers of the world. 3. Just before the destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman armies a mysterious voice was heard by the Christians, calling to them, "Come out of her": so now such a voice is heard by true Christians, calling them to separate themselves from the debased religion which has deceived so many: it is a voice from God. 4. The incense of prayer should be ever going up from men to God, but this is a dark smoke of sinful thought which rises up from the earth. 5. Under the Jewish law,

for theft or wrong against a neighbour the wrong doer was compelled to restore double (Ex. xxii, 4, 7, 9) : so here we find that evil as well as good returns to the doer with full interest. 6. This parody of the Christian Church claimed to reign with Christ and to be His Bride and to enter into joy with Him, and yet wantoned with the world, and her punishment must come in proportion to her false glorying. 7. For her the writing is upon the wall, and her destruction shall come as suddenly and unexpectedly as it came to Babylon of old, when Cyrus and his armies entered the city at night. 8. The great worldly powers lament her fall, for the existence of false religion had sheltered them from the continual reproach of the true Christian faith, which condemns them utterly. 9, 10. The next verses tell of the lamentation of those who, setting their heart on earthly gain, made profit out of a religion which should have meant to them the setting of spiritual wealth above all such gain, and following Christ on the way of the Holy Cross. The list of merchandise is hard to understand ; it seems to be first a list of such things as would be purchased for use in the Services of the Temple, such things as the Israelites gave so freely at first when Solomon's Temple was built (down to the word "sheep"), and then to go off on the thought of how the leaders of the Israelite Church disregarded the will of God that they should trust wholly in Him and not make provision of horses and chariots or treat men as slaves : and then winds up with the charge of purchasing the souls of men. But now the true Church of God stands pure and freed from all this, and the degenerate Church exists no more : therefore those who became rich by her mourn. 11—17a. Next we hear of those who were frankly worldly, who make their living by the

tossing restless "sea" of a sinful world: they stood afar off always from religion, but they look on with wonder at the destruction of that which they thought stood for religion, though it was only a parody of it: for they too had made gain out of her. Notice that the doom of the false Church is seen coming nearer and nearer. "The kings of the earth *shall weep*; the merchants weep the mariners *cried out*." 17b—19. Those who truly belong to heaven, who have their part with the saints, apostles and prophets, as all true Christians do, are called by God to rejoice in the destruction of the city of debased religion, which has deceived so many. 20. St. John sees before his eyes a symbol of the destruction of the city in the casting of a great stone into the sea of that world which has given itself to evil. 21. All that belongs to the joy and art and daily work of man is lost to her; she has no light to guide her, for the great powers of the world can give no light to her; they were but princes of a world of sin: no more the happiness of true union of men with Christ: false religion is so judged, because it bewitched the people with its sorcery. 22, 23. Our Lord said to the degenerate Jews "that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of Abel the righteous unto the blood of Zachariah son of Barachiah, whom ye slew between the sanctuary and the Altar. Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation." So the Apostle in his vision sees the fulfilment of the prophecy in the destruction of the nominal Christianity of those who in words confess Christ, but in deeds deny Him. 24.

CHAPTER XIX.

We here pass on to new ground. The last section of the book (vi. to xviii.) showed us our Lord's great conflict in and with His Church against the evil in the world, a conflict which culminates in the destruction of Babylon, the city of false religion (corresponding to chapters v. to xii. in St. John's Gospel). The final victory is not yet seen, but in xix. to xx. 6 we find that it is so far finished that faithful disciples are already entering into their triumph and rest. They will be partners with our Lord in the final destruction of evil. The corresponding section in St. John's Gospel is xiii—xvii. where, all being ready for the final triumph on the Cross, our Lord celebrates the Holy Sacrament with His disciples, speaks to them words of peace and assurance and pours forth from His heart His great High-priestly prayer.

The song of the heavenly host is heard, with its keynote of Hallelujah, "Praise be to God," ascribing to God's infinite love the salvation brought to earth, with God's gifts of glory and power. And the chief thought is that of the condemnation of the kingdom of false religion, which has for so long deceived the world. 1 and 2. The fire of the destruction of Sodom went up before God, denoting the effect of His judgment on an ungodly city: so, instead of the perpetual Incense ascending from God's Temple on earth, we see the "smoke" of God's judgment on Babylon as a perpetual witness to the awfulness of sin. 3. The redeemed Church of God and the Creation, freed by man's redemption to serve God in holiness, answer the host of heaven with their loud Amen and take up the song of praise. 4. From the Throne of God Himself comes the voice calling on God's people to praise

Him. 5. Here we seem to hear multitudes from the earth, who have longed for God and truth, great waves of truth upon earth in the hearts of men, and those who have seen and wondered at God's thunders of judgment on sin, joining in singing a song of praise, new to them because they have missed much of God's truth on earth, though they have sought for it : they rejoice in the manifestation of God in His kingdom amongst men. 6. And God's purpose, dimly revealed in the prophets, who were moved to the thought of God's people as His Bride, is now made clear : God has given the Christ to be wedded to His Church, and all is ready for the completion of the marriage. 7. The Church is seen arrayed in her bright linen, which is the righteousness of the saints, with which she has clothed herself throughout the ages, the righteousness which is our Lord's own gift to her. 8. In the corresponding section of St. John we read of the institution of the Lamb's Banquet, the Holy Communion : so here we read of it in its fulfilment as the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, to which the faithful are called. It seems again to be an angel representative of our Lord who speaks, and assures the Seer that these marvels are indeed God's purpose. 9. Overwhelmed with astonishment and delight, the Seer is moved to fall down and worship the Angel, who disclaims such an action, which is due only to God : he himself is but one of the great fellowship of those who bear witness to Jesus, the true prophet. 10.

Now we hear more of the victory and rest of God's people : our Lord Himself comes forth to be married to His Church and to lead her to the Marriage Supper.

In vi. 2 we read of our Lord going forth to the conflict against sin, conquering and to conquer : here He is seen returning in triumph : He has proved Himself faithful

to the promises of God, and the revealer of Truth which has been so much hidden on earth. He has conquered, not by force, but by righteousness. 11. The eyes like a flame of fire remind us of the vision in i. 14; they have been the fire of judgment, but now are the fire of love. The "diadems" are tokens of the authority over all things given to Him by God. The "name" is the revelation of all that He means to man, the fulness of which no man is able to conceive. 12. His character is that of one who has passed through the extreme conflict against the enemies of God, and who has offered His own life in it: and through it all He has not lived for Himself, but has gone through the world as the revelation of God. 13. And the great company of heaven follow Him; their character has been made white and clean "in the Blood of the Lamb." 14. Still the full conquest has to come; the Word of God is still going forth from Him as the sharp sword to pierce finally the hearts of the enemies of God who reject Him, the ungodly world whose final judgment is not yet shown: He is now to shepherd them, not with the gentle crook of the Shepherd which they have refused, but with a rod of iron: He treads in the winepress of judgment. 15. But He Himself is seen with the dominion which God has given Him as the Lord of all Creation: the "name" which marks His character and His actions. 16. In i. 16 our Lord's face was seen like "the sun that shineth in his strength"; men cannot gaze upon it: an Angel form is seen to represent Him; he calls to the powers of nature ("birds") to fulfil God's justice on man who has chosen sin instead of God: nature has been hurt and perverted through man's sin, and it is nature which is called to execute the Judgment. 17. The judgment is not only upon

those who have been strong and arrogant in their worldliness, but upon all who have lived for the world and not for God. 18. The final conflict and victory, as foreseen in the visions before, are further described. It is the final Armageddon, in which the beast, the spirit of the world, and the strong men of the world and their armies (not a united army as that of our Lord is) fight against Jesus and His army. 19. The spirit of the world and the spirit of false religion are taken captive and cast into the lake of fire: the fire, which should be to them the symbol of purifying grace and pardon of God, being rejected, becomes to them the symbol of unceasing desire for sin; their own thoughts of evil, hatred and restlessness form their atmosphere, which should have been the heart rejoicing in the love of God. 20. Their followers find themselves without life, for the word of God, which they have refused, has slain them, for in refusing it they have been dying all along, as our Lord says, "The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge them at the last day." Their being given over to the birds seems to denote that there is in nature the punishment which must follow the rejection of truth. 21.

CHAPTER XX.

The section of rest for God's people in anticipation of complete victory ends with the vision of the judgment of Satan and the full triumph of the righteous.

A vast well or pit, closed by a cover and secured by a lock is seen: it is a symbol of God's complete power over the spirits of evil. An Angel representing our Lord

in His character as the man sent to conquer Satan, comes from God with the key of the abyss and a great chain to bind Satan. 1. Satan, always under the power of God, is allowed in the ages of the past and in our Lord's earthly life to work his wicked will in tempting man to hate and offend God. But our Lord by His perfect obedience to the will of God, and refusal of the least thought of sin, has chained Satan completely, and so kept him utterly in His own hands to deal with him as He will, shut out from all true freedom : Satan thought he had conquered our Lord when our Lord's Body was laid in the Tomb and sealed with Pilate's seal, but our Lord rose from the dead : so Satan is seen as completely in God's power, but released for a time and allowed to tempt man still, that man may find life in conquering his attacks. (We cannot here defend this interpretation, in which 1,000 years is simply a symbol of the completeness of our Lord's victory over Satan : all the numbers in the book are symbols, and none of them mere numbers : 1,000 is the number of God's perfected work, as in the number of the redeemed, 144,000, which expresses the final completion of God's kingdom). " Devil " means " slanderer " : " Satan " means " adversary ". The " Dragon " is spoken of in Chapter xii. In the vision Satan, being loose, is caught and shut up in the abyss. The " nations " means the godless world which refuses the reign of the Christ. 2, 3. The souls are those of the faithful members of Christ, of whom He promised, " To him that overcometh I will give to sit down with Me in My throne." They are already judged as cleansed from sin and filled with the life of God ; there is no further judgment for them : they are those who had given their lives utterly to God as His witnesses, whether actually

Martyrs or not ; they had steadfastly refused to submit to the spirit of the world, or to give themselves as its servants. 4. There could be no resurrection of the dead till our Lord had conquered death completely : it is not bodies alone that are spoken of ; it rather seems to be the resurrection to new life, which is begun in our baptism, and is completed in the full redemption of the body in its resurrection : there is no second resurrection spoken of in the book. 5. All true Christians have part in the reign of Christ ; they live with the blessing of God on all their life, as consecrated (‘ holy ’) ones who have found their true end in the love which gives itself wholly to God, and comes forth from God in service to man : they enjoy all the fruits of our Lord’s resurrection, which is repeated in their resurrection to the fulness of real life in God : they are untouched by the “ second death,” the state of the soul which has lost its life in God : they find their entire satisfaction in their priesthood of love, the utter joy of service : they share with the Christ in His eternal glory. 6.

CHAPTER XX. 7.

As St. John’s Gospel shews us our Lord bringing peace and joy into the heart of His disciples in the vision of peace and joy through His victory over sin (xiii-xvii) ; so in Rev. xix. to xx. 6. we have had the thought of rest for the true disciples of Jesus in the vision of rejoicing over the Marriage of the Lamb. He, in His invisible rule over His kingdom on earth, has completed the work of victory over all the enemies of God, though the final

manifestation of this victory still remains to be seen. Again, in St. John's Gospel we have Chapters xviii-xx. telling of the working out on Calvary of the redemption, which deals with the whole world story from the beginning to the end, and we see God's seal set to it all in the fact of the Resurrection: and here in Rev. xx. 7—xxii. 5, we are called upon to see the completed victory over sin, which has been going on through the whole past of mankind; and God's answer to it in the vision of the New Jerusalem, the perfected City of God; and we note that this also is a purpose of God which He has been working out through the ages.

Satan has been completely conquered in God's work throughout the ages, which is to be consummated in the final victory of the last judgment. The victory centres round our Lord's personal work, represented by the binding of the "thousand" years. But Satan has been allowed by the wisdom of God still to go on tempting and deceiving men. 7. The nations of the earth are all those who, refusing their due obedience to God, choose to live independently of His purpose for them. The evil influence of their spirit sweeps over the whole earth. The great army of worldliness is compared to Gog and Magog who were overthrown by the Israelite armies, a Prince and nation fierce, rapacious and cruel, who are taken as a type of Satan and those under his leading. Satan gathers them together for the great war of the world's history in their untold numbers. 8. By Satan and his followers the kingdom of God on earth has been and is besieged, but God has constantly manifested the fire of His wrath against them. 9. And now at the end the great enemy of God and His people is submerged in the evil which he has made his god and his good, together

with his two emissaries, the spirit of the world and the spirit of false religion. We seem to see them impenitently pursuing evil still, and remember that our Lord speaks of an "eternal sin" as a possibility, though it is certainly a mystery which we cannot fathom: only we can and do believe that nothing whatever can contradict the certainty of the love of God. 10.

Then we have vision of men in the final judgment. We see our Lord seated in the Throne of God, for God has given to Him to judge the world. The old order of the world, and the view of the heavenly state from the earth—with the old standards of time and space—have passed away. 11. Those who are judged are they who have let their spiritual powers die. Their works, which are not good, and their failures to take hold of God are not merely past and forgotten things, as if they had never been: all is still recorded against them, for godless deeds can only be wiped out of the record by repentance which they have not exercised and pardon of God which they have not sought. And yet there is another "book," "the book of life," in which may be there are works of theirs on record which may modify their judgment. 12. The tossing restless sea of the world's sin can but surrender to God its dead in sin, and the unseen world where souls have waited for judgment, being held prisoners because they have never claimed the love and power of Him who has the "keys of death and Hades," gives up those held in its shades: they are brought forward for judgment. 13. And now death and Hades are to have no more power—they are only to be found as part of the judgment to which the spirits of evil have been already consigned. And this state is the second death, the death of souls deprived of all true life by their own will, for they have

chosen evil. 14. And it is men who are here seen in company with the spirits of evil. 15.

CHAPTER XXI.

All the enemies of God have now been vanquished, and we are told of the glory and happiness of the people of God in their eternal home.

The heaven for which man was made, is a oneness between God and man which could only be seen dimly upon earth, but is now manifested in its full beauty and satisfaction : the new earth is seen in the loving union of man with man, not hurt and spoilt, as our society on earth is, by selfishness and other sin, but full of joyous service for our fellows and the intercourse of most happy union. The former stage of human life has given way to something infinitely better. And here is a great symptom of the change, in that the tossing restless sea of sin in the world no longer exists. 1. The old Jerusalem was a type of God dwelling in the midst of His people, guiding and directing their social and individual life : the New Jerusalem is a fresh Gift of God perfecting that ideal. This new kingdom finds its union with God and all truth in its union, which God has prepared for it, with the Christ. St. John the Baptist could see this wonderful idea, which God was bringing to light in his time : he speaks of the Christ as the Bridegroom waiting for His Bride, His Church, while he himself is just the friend of the Bridegroom ready to serve Him. Now the Church, fully the kingdom of God, is ready for the perfecting of her union with her Lord. 2. At last, for the first time

in the book, God is represented as speaking personally ; for His people are now able to hear even the words of the Almighty and utterly to rejoice in them. In the Incarnation the Word of God, the Christ, "tabernacled among us : " and this Tabernacle of our Lord's Body was truly the meeting place of God and man : but now his place as " Immanuel " (" God with us ") has been perfected in the bringing of His people with Himself to be the Tabernacle of God's presence for ever ; and God is with them. 3. Henceforth there is no more sorrow, no more death, bodily or spiritual, with its sad separations of those who love ; in the former stage of life mourning for sin and the brave acceptance of sorrow had been promised special blessing, but now there is no need of them : pain had been needed to warn us of danger and to be the means of offering to God, but now there is no necessity for it. The first stage of life with all its troubles is passed. 4.

God Himself speaks again : He proclaims that His work amongst men is to give to all earthly things that are good new and eternal value. The new heavens and the new earth are the end towards which God has been always working. Now at last opposition to the Truth and neglect of the true life of man is no more : now the faithful and true Word of God has its full sway. 5. The future for which the Saints of God have longed is come and their hopes are realised. God is seen as the beginning and end of all things (Alpha and Omega are the first and last words of the Greek Alphabet—God has expressed Himself fully). The water of life has been given before to those who thirsted for it : now they are able to receive ever-fresh supplies of grace to the full to sustain them in spiritual life and joy. 6. Now the

promises of Chapters 2 and 3 are fulfilled to those who have boldly fought against sin. God is fully revealed as our Father, and the sonship of man is perfected. 7. The timid who have shrunk from the struggle of life, and all who refused the Christ, and all who have plunged themselves into sin and have cast aside grace are subject to the death of the soul, at the full meaning of which we can hardly even guess. 8. In xvii. 1, one of these same angel representatives of our Lord pointed out the great city of false religion, the harlot city, Babylon doomed to destruction. Now is seen the true city of God, God's gift to man, wholly united to the Christ. From the top of a mountain our Lord in His temptation saw the great cities of our present world : now St. John looks out over the city of God. 9 and 10. The light of God lightens the city within and without. In iv. 3, the glory of God on His throne was compared to the flashing purity of Jasper with the blood-red sign of His Majesty and Judgment in the Sardius ; now the city of God is seen and filled with the Jasper light of Holiness and love, which she sheds around her. 11. The people of God have always rejoiced to note the wall of God's love which surrounds their Spiritual city (Psalm xlviii. 12-14), and the redeemed Church has the same joy. The portals of entry are still the doctrines of the Christ (12 is the special number of the faith in Christ) and the angels at them represent the Christ standing at the door of the fold to tend His sheep, as in St. John x. 7 ; but the Christ is never without His people ; Christ is Himself the door and the Wall of God's love, and the names of His people are written on His heart. 12. The doors of the city of God hold a similar position to those of the Tabernacle in the Wilderness, and are evidently thus spoken of to

serve as a symbol of God dwelling in the midst of His people.

13. The great city of God is built up upon those Apostles, whom God called to be the first members and ministers of His Church. "Upon this rock I will build my Church."

14. Even created minds are able at last to measure the breadth and depth and height of the glory of God in His revelation of His purpose for His people.

15. In the Tabernacle the Holy of Holies was a perfect cube, measuring the same each way, a symbol of the earthly perfection of worship; the thought of this perfection is carried on in the Heavenly City.

The number 12,000 represents the true doctrine of God manifested through Christ as seen in its Heavenly perfection (1,000 represents Divine completion). The three next words, the three

measurements of space, may speak to us of the knowledge of God, Three in One, pervading the whole Kingdom of God.

16. The wall being a representation of the Christ, the 144 would represent the doctrine of Christ, (12), multiplied into itself throughout the ages of the Christian faith.

The city of God is composed of people, and these figures are such as man can understand when the angel messenger tells of them.

17. God dwells in every part of the city shining through the Christ ("wall"): the most precious product of earth is there, but not itself holding men's eyes, for it is "like unto pure glass,"

through which the light of God shines.

18. The Church, as it was built up through the ages has built into it countless glorious lives. We cannot attempt to define the Spiritual meaning of each precious stone, but we can see that they are all different from each other, though blending into a

harmonious unity: through each and all of them the light of God shines out.

19 and 20. We must take care to understand that the "pearls", as the other precious

stones and the "gold" are symbols. In St. Matthew xiii. 45, Our Lord uses the term "pearls" to signify the precious things of the Kingdom of Heaven: so as you enter the portals of the city you pass into the midst of the one revelation of God's love and of Sacramental Grace: and as you pass through into the city you find that the love of God is that on which you ever stand. 21. Churches and Temples are no longer needed, for the presence of God and the Saviour are the Temple in which all men live and in which they utterly rejoice. 22. The light of the Sun and the Moon have always been to us Sacramental signs of the Christ and His Church; but now all the shadows are gone. The glory of God is the Shechinah (the light which shone in the Holy of Holies in the Temple, as the visible symbol of God's presence) and the Saviour is the light that lightens the path of every man within the city. 23. The nations are no longer such as they were in the earlier part of the book, refusing the grace of God, but the societies of men are still to be found within the kingdom: and still there are those who stand out as Kings of the Earth, using all gifts they may have, no more for self, but for the service of God and man. 24. Inhabitants of the Kingdom are in perfect peace and security. Isaiah (lx. 11), had spoken of the future city of God, "Thy gates shall not be shut day or night;" St. John uses the thought of these words to say that the darkness of the night is passed for the true light now shines. 25. The nations of the earth shall bring all their gifts to the altar of the great city, for the new Jerusalem claims and receives freely all the glory and honour of which man is capable. 26. All that enter the city will be wholly free from sin, "made clean in the Blood of the Lamb," and no hateful thing or falsehood can enter

there : all sin has been banished for ever : each and every member of the city is known and registered in the Heart of the Divine Saviour. 27.

CHAPTER XXII. 1—5.

The imagery of these verses recalls the thought of the earthly paradise of Genesis i. and ii. : the promise fore-shadowed in that picture of man dwelling for ever in God's presence is now seen to be fulfilled.

From the presence of the Holy Trinity, still and for ever through Jesus the Son of God, our Saviour, the refreshing and quickening stream of life floods out upon all men, of sparkling purity and clearness ; " There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God," (Ps. xlv. 4). - The water of life is seen as a clear stream sparkling down the midst of each street in the city, with trees of virtues, graces and blessings continually nourished by it. Above all there is seen the Tree of Life, foreshadowed in the Garden of Eden, bearing all the fruits of faith which the Christ has brought to man (symbolised by the 12 of the months of the year). The societies of men are kept in soundness of health through its healing virtues. 1 and 2. Nothing can be present there but that which is fit for the presence of God. The innermost sanctuary of the Heart of God is seen, and still from it the grace flows out through the Son of God, perfect God and perfect man. The true joy of His servants is found at last in living in no way for themselves, but utterly and always for the service of the Eternal Father of Love. 3. Moses heard the voice of the Almighty, " Thou canst

not see My Face ; for there shall no man see Me and live " : now God is revealed to man through the Son, and they " see Him even as He is " (1 John iii. 2). " Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." The High Priest of old wore on his forehead a plate of gold engraved with the name of " Jehovah " : the name is the revelation of God never absent from their minds as they serve as priests in His Sanctuary. 4. The redeemed find no interruption in their joyful service and need no nightly rest to recruit them : man has always searched for light, and now the great source of all light gives it to him in full. Now is fulfilled our Lord's promise that they shall " sit down with their Lord in His throne, even as He overcame and sat down with His Father in His throne." 5.

CHAPTER XXII. 6—21.

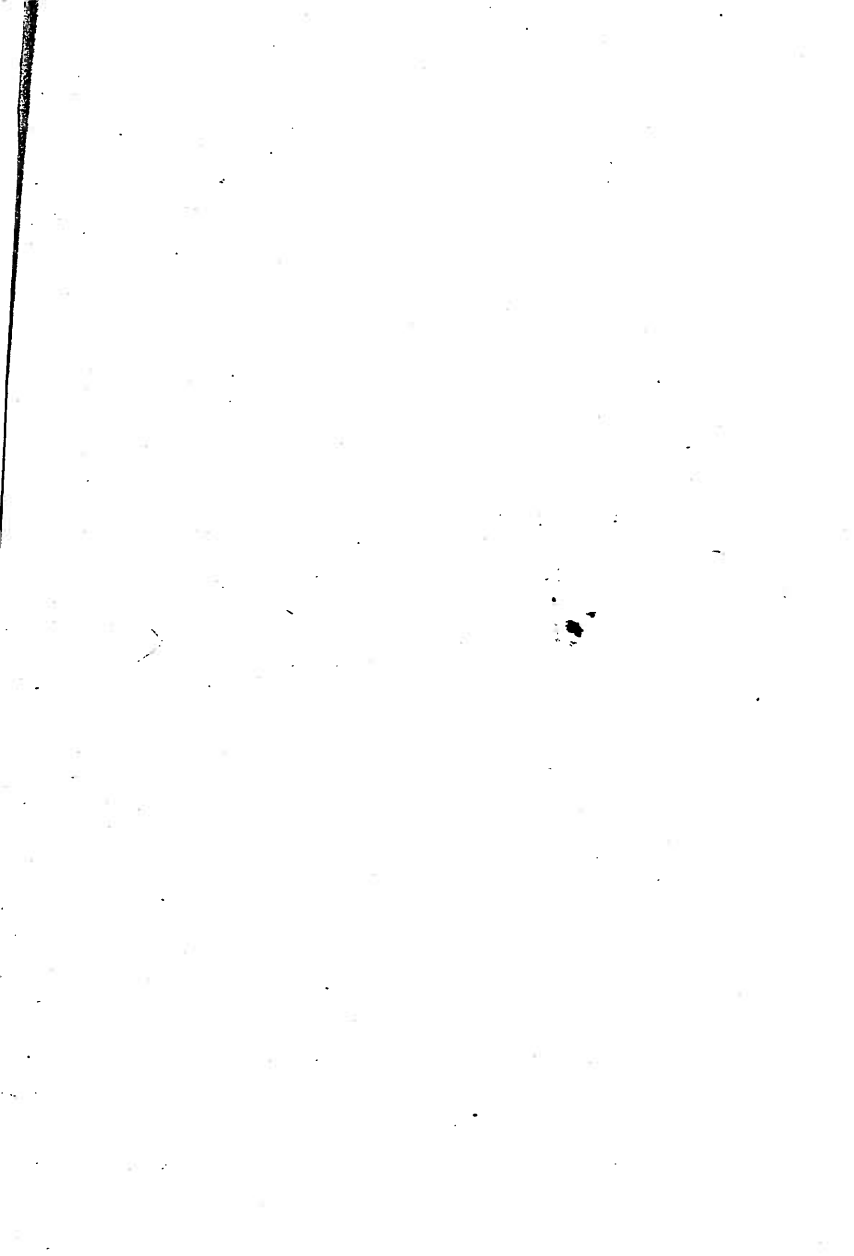
Here we have the Epilogue, corresponding with the last chapter of St. John's Gospel. In the Gospel we see our Lord preparing His disciples for their future life in the Church : here we see the Church waiting and looking forward to the full manifestation of Christ, of which we have read in the book.

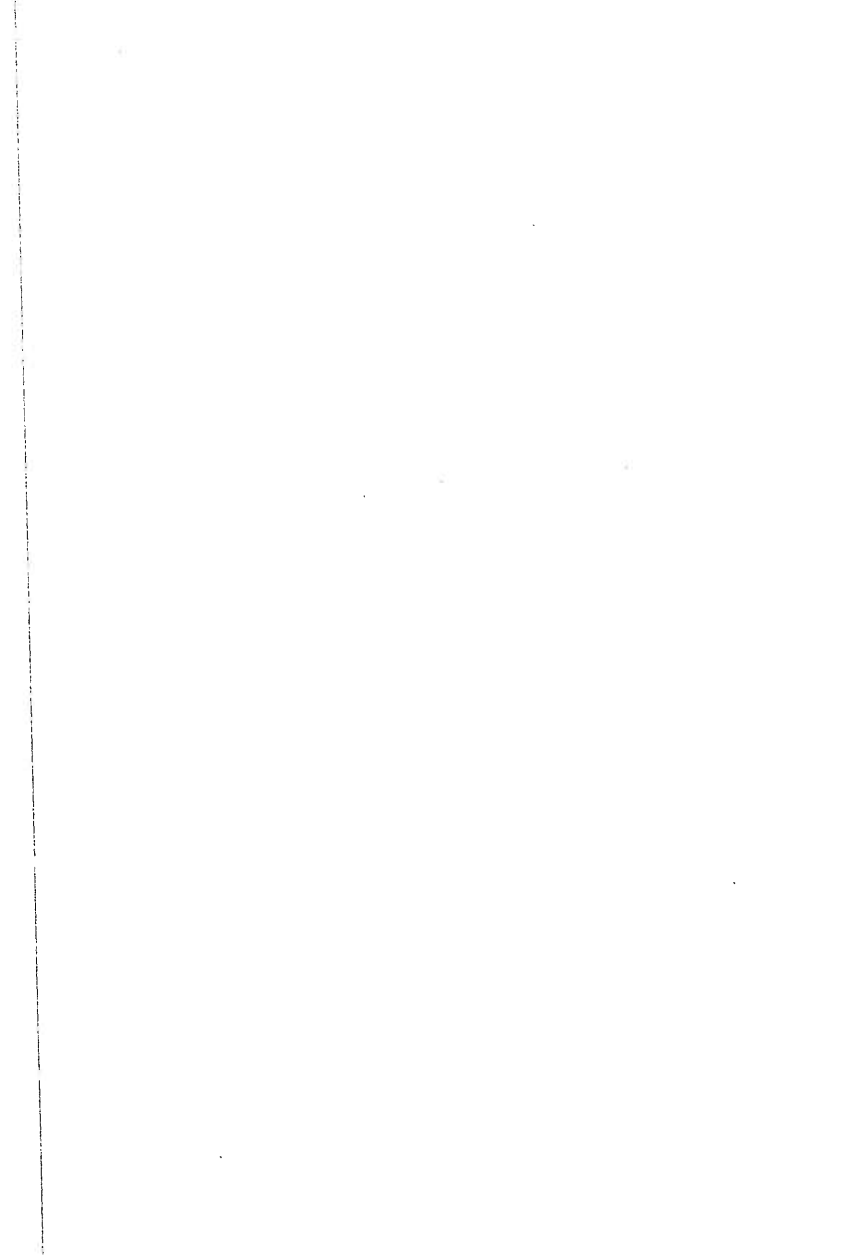
First, the angel representative of our Lord proclaims that all that has been heard and seen is indeed the carrying out of the faithful and true purpose of God from its beginning to the end, as shadowed by seers and prophets of old : the vision of the revelation hastens to its fulfilment 6. The Church for ever must bear in mind and look forward to our Lord's coming as the aim of her faith through the time that remains : the revelation of this

book must ever be in her mind. 7. Through it all John the beloved disciple has been present, has heard and seen : now he is moved to worship the Angel of the revelation. 8. The Angel forbids the worship and proclaims that he is but a fellow servant with the saint and his brother prophets and all faithful servants of Christ : before God alone may all His creatures bow in worship. 9 The revelation is not to be a sealed and hidden book : it is written for the instruction and guidance of the Church : no time is to be lost : the Lord is at hand. 10. The mystery of God's dealing with man is fully revealed : men will be responsible still as they were before : wrong-doing will beget wrong-doing, and righteous doing will lead to still more righteous-doing, and holy service will lead to still more holy Service. 11. At our Lord's last coming to this earth He will give to all that which is their due. 12. The Christ Himself speaks and proclaims Himself as the complete Word of God, the beginning of creation and its final end. 13. He proclaims the blessing of those who so come to the Christ as to claim their right as the sons of God to all the privileges of the Kingdom of God, entering into it all through Jesus. 14. But again we are warned that evil doers who know no repentance have no place in the Holy City. 15. Again we are made sure that it is Jesus Himself who is the author of this book. Moreover, He is behind all God's dealings with man throughout the ages : He is the root from which sprang the glorious promises to the Israelite Church : He is the Child, the Son of God, who is also the offspring of the family of David : He is the bright and morning star which has ever been rising above the mists of earth. 16. St. John again speaks : the Holy Spirit and the Church of God are ever calling to Christ to manifest

Himself : all with attentive ear will echo the cry : all that are thirsting for righteousness are bid to come to the Christ and receive from Him the Water of Life which He longs to give them. 17. The seer adds a great warning that we should take this book, however difficult we may find it to interpret as a most certain revelation of God's purpose. 18 and 19. The whole inner meaning of the book is summed up by our Lord Himself in these words "yea : I come quickly " and the Church of the believers responds with the prayer, which is left for ever in the heart of the Church, " Verily : come Lord Jesus." 20. The Apostle, who spoke of himself at the very beginning as " John the servant of God " ends by pronouncing the blessing which sums up all other blessings for the people of God, conveying the grace of God through Jesus to all His members. 21.

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